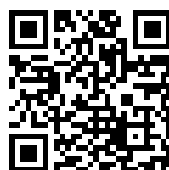
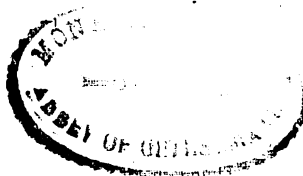

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ORIGINAL,
SHORT AND PRACTICAL
SERMONS

FOR
EVERY FEAST OF THE ECCLESIASTICAL YEAR.

THREE SERMONS FOR EVERY FEAST.

BY
F. X. WENINGER, S. J.

DOCTOR OF THEOLOGY.

SECOND EDITION.



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PREFACE.

To keep the promise, which I made, I have also given to the Press a series of *Festival Sermons*.

As this volume is intended for circulation in Europe as well as in America, it contains Sermons appropriate not only for the Feasts kept here, but likewise for those which, in greater numbers, are observed in Europe and in other trans-Atlantic countries.

I hope, nevertheless, that all these Festival Sermons will prove acceptable to the Reverend Clergy of America. For the Feasts which occur during the week, and are not of obligation, are often made the subject-matter of the Sunday within the Octave.

At times, too, such Feasts fall on Sundays; as, for instance, Candlemas-day, the Feasts of the Annunciation, of St. Joseph, SS. Peter and Paul, the Guardian Angels, and others.

The Sermons set down for Easter Monday and Pentecost Monday may also be preached on Easter and Pentecost Sunday, and thus we obtain six Sermons instead of three for each of these two Solemnities.

Since the Festival Sermons and Sunday Sermons form a series, they appear under one and the same title, and their contents will make good that they are

original in treatment—*short* and *practical*—*three* for every Festival.

The present volume, however, is nearly as large as that of the Sunday Sermons, for the reason that, as was mentioned above, it contains Sermons for the Festivals observed in Europe and elsewhere.

Besides, they are treated more fully and are of greater length. For since on Feast days the people are disposed to assist longer at divine service than on ordinary Sundays, the Sermons, too, may be more protracted.

May Mary, as the Mother of the Incarnate Word, bless these Sermons.

THE AUTHOR.

FEAST OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION.

FIRST SERMON.

“Thou art all fair, O my love, and there is not a spot in thee!”—Cant. 4.

AS Christ, in a figurative manner, is compared to the sun, whose rise imparts strength, consolation, and growth to our spiritual life; so, in the same figurative manner, do we behold in Mary, the mother of Jesus, the rosy dawn which appeared before the day of salvation. This explains why we, as children of God, should also, at the beginning of Advent, in a special manner, renew our devotion to Mary, the mother of God, and offer her our homage and our petitions.

The feast which the Church celebrates to-day makes manifest to us how desirous the Church is, that, during the holy time of Advent, we should earnestly and with particular ardor recommend ourselves to the protection and intercession of Mary.

The Church celebrates to-day the Feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Making abstraction of the solemn declaration of Pope Pius IX., let us to-day reflect upon the reasons which prove to our mind enlightened by faith—

(1)

That Mary is the one, and the only one, among the children of men who came into existence free from every stain of sin.

O Mary, we pray Thee, obtain for us the grace to live, as thy children, free from sin!

I speak in the holy name of Jesus, to the greater honor of God!

Beloved in Christ: I have said, that by my sermon of to-day in honor of the Blessed Virgin, I wish to remind you of the reasons which prove that Mary came into existence free from every stain of original sin. I wish to do it, because this is one of those articles of faith which are so frequently misunderstood, attacked, and denied by the enemies of our holy religion.

What an advantage it would be if all the children of the Church were so thoroughly instructed, not only in this article of faith, but as regards all the doctrines of the Church, that they might be enabled to state definitely and correctly the articles of their faith, and show forth evidence that these articles are revealed truths, and have been held by the Church at *all* times!

The opponents of the Church misinterpret her teachings. The same may be said, alas! but too frequently of Catholics themselves who have not been thoroughly instructed in their religion,—those who are mere nominal Catholics, and who live as such, clearly manifesting, by their actions, that they do not live of the root of faith.

In the case of non-Catholics this apparent ignorance is often but a deliberate perversion of language. How important, therefore, is it, that every well-instructed Catholic should clearly show the opponents of religion their ignorance and their willful malice, and prove to them that all their insinuations and accusations against the Church and its doctrines are utterly base, and really merit naught but contempt.

Thus, for instance, we are accused of adoring the saints and their images; of purchasing indulgences in order to sin more freely; of adoring the Blessed Virgin, and of placing greater confidence in her assistance than in that of Christ Himself.

The doctrine of Mary's Immaculate Conception is especially misrepresented. Our enemies accuse us of believing that Mary was not born as other mortals,—that she, like Christ, was conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost.

What pitiable and disgraceful ignorance, or intentional malice, which can invent such fables.

Go and say to such scoffers: Friend, let me disabuse you of your error. Mary was a human being; St. Ann was her mother, and St. Joachim her father; but the omnipotence of God prevented her being deprived of sanctifying grace and being born in disfavor of God, in the state of original sin,—a state in which all other children of Adam are born, in consequence of the sin of our first parents.

This privilege was a particular favor granted to her by God. This preference was *due* to her as the one

chosen to be the mother of the Redeemer. The learned Duns Scotus has justly remarked: "God *could* effect this—it was proper that He should do so—hence He *did* so." He preserved Mary free from the stain of original sin.

God *could* do it; He is omnipotent! It was proper that He should, for the sake of Christ, who was to be born of Mary.

Should Jesus, the heavenly Adam, have taken His flesh and blood from a soil that had once borne the curse of sin? This would not have been fitting. The body of the primitive Adam was taken from an unpolluted soil; therefore it would not have been suitable that the body of Christ, the "heavenly Adam," as the Apostle calls him, should be taken from a soil stained by sin. He who *triumphed* over death and hell could certainly not allow His mother to have been at any time under the control of Satan. The disgrace of the mother taints the honor of the son.

When we take into consideration the dignity of the Blessed Virgin, and her rank in the kingdom of God, we undoubtedly will acknowledge that it was but just she should be endowed with this purity. As mother of the Son of God made man, she was to be enthroned at the right hand of her divine Son as queen of heaven and earth.

The world was without blemish when it came forth from the hand of its Creator. The angels, both victorious and fallen, came into existence untarnished. Should she who was chosen to crush the serpent's

head—she who was to be the queen of angels—ever have been a slave of Satan?

This doctrine is confirmed by Sacred Scripture and the teachings of the holy Fathers. As regards Holy Scripture, the words of the Lord addressed to Satan in paradise, already point to this prerogative: "She shall crush thy head." This assurance was given him immediately after the fall of man, and with the first promise of redemption.

Had Mary been born in the state of original sin, then Satan would have crushed her head, and not she the head of Satan. This *crushing* points to a total destruction of the power of Satan.

Furthermore, the Sacred Scriptures speak of Mary, the future mother of the Redeemer, as: "The one chosen one; the stainless, all-pure one; the lily among thorns; the sealed-up fountain; the invincible tower."

The angel who declared unto Mary that she was to be the mother of God, called her: "Full of grace." But she could not have been full of grace had she been devoid of the first and most precious of all graces—freedom from sin—at the first moment of her existence.

The prerogative of the Blessed Virgin is also confirmed by tradition. The Apostle St. Andrew declares, in his speech delivered in the presence of the pro-consul of Patras: "Just as Adam was formed of a soil on which the curse of sin had never rested, so also was the body of the heavenly Adam formed of a sinless virgin." St. Ambrose calls Mary "free from

every stain of sin." St. Augustine says: "When sin is spoken of let no mention be made of Mary, because of the honor of the Lord."

In like manner do all the Fathers of the Church express themselves, and, with St. Chrysostom, they call Mary purer than all the choirs of angels.

The devotion of the faithful, in regard to this prerogative of the Blessed Virgin rose to such a degree that Pope Pius IX. thought it opportune to proclaim this dogma an article of faith, in contradiction to the growing infidelity with which the world regards all revelation. He did so, in the fullest conviction that the glory which would accrue to Mary by this declaration would, at the same time, increase and strengthen devotion to her in the hearts of all the faithful. Surrounded by two hundred bishops of the Catholic Church, he pronounced the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary an article of faith.

Let us be thankful to God therefor. Let us strive to be worthy children of such a mother, and, by a pure and sinless life, give a pleasing and meritorious evidence of our joy at beholding Mary thus glorified! Amen!

SECOND SERMON.

"And a great sign appeared in heaven: A woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars."—Apoc. 12.

AMONG the various privileges of the Blessed Virgin, the one which the Church recalls to us by the feast of to-day strikes us as being altogether peculiar in character.

In regard to all the other prerogatives of Mary, they are in themselves an incitement for us, who are her children, to derive from them some benefit for ourselves, and to sanctify our lives by the imitation of her virtues.

But *this* privilege which was granted to none but Mary, seems, exceptionally, to bear no practical reference whatever to our life of virtue.

And yet from the consideration of this mystery can be drawn much that has reference to our lives as children of God. I admit: We certainly had not the happiness of entering this world free from the stain of sin; still the Sacrament of Baptism which, perhaps we were so fortunate as to receive on the very day, or even in the hour of our birth, *cleansed* our soul entirely from the guilt of Adam. Alas! how few preserve their baptismal innocence! How soon is it lost! And why is this?

A glance at the image of the Immaculate Conception will give you the answer to this question.

O Mary, whose child I became at baptism, beg for me the grace never to lose my baptismal innocence; or, if unfortunately I have lost it, obtain that I may again cleanse my soul from every stain of sin, by the baptism of penance!

I speak in the holy name of Jesus, to the greater honor of God!

What a precious boon baptismal innocence is, what an extraordinary grace, what a singular privilege! In the past five thousand years countless persons have lived who never had the happiness of receiving baptism.

Although Mary was the only being among all the children of men who enjoyed the happiness and the singular grace of coming into existence, free from all stain of original sin, yet we also, who have been born of Catholic parents, have received, without any merit of our own, a most wondrous grace, in being so soon cleansed by baptism from original sin, and thereby becoming pleasing to God.

If we had died the moment after receiving baptism we would have immediately entered heaven, there to enjoy the beatific vision. If this fact furnishes such a potent reason for being grateful to God, must we not be filled with sadness when we reflect that so few of those baptized retain their innocence unto the close of their lives?

Ask of yourself: How is it with me? Have I never in my life committed one mortal sin?—If not, oh! then

thank God and rejoice. But, alas! the number of those who are conscious of this privilege is very small.

As regards baptism, there are millions and hundreds of millions who share this happiness with us. But how few of these, if they die as adults, bear their baptismal innocence beyond the grave! And how few of these millions, who reach manhood or old age, have never in their life sinned mortally! I may say the large majority lose the precious grace of innocence in their youth.

And, you may ask, what is the cause of this? I said: That one glance at the image of the Blessed Virgin, which we are accustomed to call that of the Immaculate Conception, will give you the answer.

As is well known, we are wont to represent the Immaculate Conception in this manner: Mary is represented as a virgin, with eyes cast down, and hands folded as if in prayer. She places one foot upon the moon, whilst with the other she crushes the head of the serpent that lies upon the ground, bearing an apple in its mouth.

Behold, in this image the reasons why so many persons so soon lose the grace of baptism; behold also the virtues, on the diligent practice of which depends the preservation of baptismal innocence!

Mary has one *foot* upon the earth. This teaches us, that if we wish to retain our innocence we must sever our hearts from all inordinate desire for those things which the world offers—earthly possessions, worldly honor, worldly enjoyments.

We must fully understand, that whatever the world may offer with the promise of rendering us happy here below, is naught but dross and disappointment, that can never satisfy the cravings of our hearts, which were created solely for God and for heaven. But this conviction must be so entire, that we not only do not prefer the goods and pleasures of this world to those spiritual ones which our faith and the intercourse with God grant us even in this world; but that we, moreover, regard them in the same light as did St. Paul when he said: I regard all that is not Christ, as the filth of the street. You must cherish the same sentiments if you wish to preserve your baptismal innocence.

But, alas! this is not the case with the great majority of the children of the Church. They overrate earthly goods and enjoyments; and even in their early youth they long for them with such eagerness, that very soon this craving proves their downfall and the occasion for mortal sin.

Mary has, at the same time, the *moon* under her feet. What meaning is hidden in this? The moon is a symbol of mutability. Man but too often forms good resolutions, but as often fails to keep them; he breaks them as readily as if he had never made them. If all Christians were to adhere to the resolutions which they formed in early youth, then would they also preserve their innocence. But here lies the fault.

Circumstances change: one leaves his home and enters with others on the every-day duties of life. He

fails in the resolutions he made of saying his prayers, of frequently receiving the Sacraments, of attending divine service, of reading spiritual books, and thus he becomes careless, yields to temptations, and commits grievous sins.

Mary stands wrapt in *pious meditation*.

If you wish to preserve your innocence untarnished, walk in the presence of God with recollection of spirit, and pray with fervor. The holy Fathers have justly remarked, that no one has ever lost his innocence who did not, in the first place, grow careless in saying his prayers, or neglect them altogether.

And to what does the *serpent*, in the image of the Immaculate Conception, point? I answer: It points to the dangers of society and bad company; to the seducing power of bad example, and encouragement to evil on the part of others. This is the means which Satan employs most frequently in bringing souls to ruin. It is intercourse with, and the encouragement of persons who have already become habitual sinners, which exercise the most potent influence over innocent souls. These are in danger of gradually ceasing to regard sin as a dreadful thing; and, being led away by the persuasive language of the seducer, they depart from the narrow path, and tread the broad road which leads to perdition. Young boys and girls who have had the advantage of a religious education at home, are but too often led away in this manner, so that a few months after their first communion they are totally changed. Intercourse with and the encouragement of

others have instilled the poison into their hearts, and entangled them in numerous occasions of sin.

Mary *crushes* the head of the serpent that holds in its mouth the apple of temptation. What does this signify? I answer: The reason why so many persons lose their baptismal innocence is this: They do not resist temptation at the outset, and crush its first beginnings.

If you wish to retain your innocence you must follow the advice of Christ: "If thy eye, hand, or foot tempt thee, cut it off—cast it away;" meaning thereby, that we should avoid all occasions of sin, no matter at what cost. If you have lost your innocence, it was because you did not follow this advice.

The image represents the Virgin with *eyes cast down*. What does this imply? I say, if you wish to preserve your innocence, you must walk in the presence of the Lord in humility of spirit, knowing full well how weak you are of yourself in the face of temptation. This trait in the image of the Blessed Virgin says to you: Humble thyself!

May the invocation of Mary Immaculate obtain for us grace, that by the practice of virtue our lives may be conformable to hers, and that we, in this world of sin, may always walk pure and spotless in the presence of God! Amen!

THIRD SERMON.

"Thou art terrible as an army set in array."—Cant. vi.

THE Holy Ghost assures us that the life of man is a warfare. It began at the fall of our first parents, and rested upon all of Adam's descendants, excepting her, whose Immaculate Conception we celebrate to-day.

Yes, it is a severe struggle which we have to maintain against the powers of darkness; against Lucifer and his allies, the fallen angels; against the world and the flesh, which, enrolled under the standard of the fallen prince of angels, and swayed by his influence and direction, oppose us as the enemies of our salvation.

The name of the Church upon earth, whose children we are, reminds us of this. We call it the "Church militant," and this it really is. But for this very reason is she destined to be for all eternity the "Church triumphant." If one day we desire to join her in the cry of victory, then must we also, like faithful children, combat and triumph with her.

It is certain that we have a powerful enemy in Lucifer and his allies; still we have no reason to be discouraged on this account, since Christ, the victor over death and hell, has provided us with so many weapons with which, assisted by His grace, we can ably defend ourselves. He appointed His own mother, Mary, to be, in particular, the guardian of His Church and of His children.

Let us draw near to her. Assisted by her, we will most assuredly conquer.

I say Mary is the terror of hell, the well-ordered army arrayed against the enemies of our salvation. Why? To this I will give the answer to-day.

O Mary, we unite our prayers with those of the Church on this day, and fly to thee for aid and protection. Defended by thee, no temptation can harm us!

I speak in the holy name of Jesus, to the greater honor of God!

I called Mary the terror of hell. In her conception she crushed the head of Satan. Protected by her we will be stronger than all the powers of Satan.

The promise which was given in paradise by the Redeemer, points to Mary, the mother of the Saviour, as the strong woman who was to crush the head of Satan. And the same is verified by the various types which Scripture presents to us in the heroines of the Old Testament. Deborah and Judith were types or figures of the Blessed Virgin; and the Church refers the words of the Canticle, which speaks of a well-ordered army and the Ark of the Covenant, to Mary.

At the foot of the cross we behold Mary, the strong tower before which hung the armor of the mighty. I, therefore, justly call Mary the terror of hell.

We will better understand these types by considering the reasons which cause a general to fear his adversary.

The first is the very person of an opponent, who, by his dignity, his character, and his talents, exercises an unbounded influence over the army intrusted to his command, so that his subjects, urged on by the consciousness of victory, obey his every word without hesitation.

How terrible is Mary in this respect, as opposed to Satan. It is true, Lucifer and all the fallen angels were gifted with incomparably higher talents than we; but this, their former natural glory, disappears when we remember the *grandeur* of Mary. She is the mother of the Jesus, whom the eternal Father has so exalted that in His name, and in acknowledgment of His power, every knee in heaven and on earth shall bend.

Next to Christ, seated on a throne of glory, is His mother Mary, who reigns as queen of heaven and earth, surrounded with such glory and magnificence as to cause all the former splendor of Satan to vanish.

In connection with this honor and glory, Mary, as mother of Jesus, also enjoys a *power* which gives her the right to say with Christ: "To me is given all power in heaven and on earth,"—a power which likewise justifies her in saying with her Son: "No one is able to wrest my sheep from me," as long as they have recourse to me, their mother and queen. Jesus, my Son, has shared His power with me. I can oppose hell with His words. And if I would ask Him to send me even a legion of angels to fight against thee, Lucifer, and thy hosts, He would grant my request at once.

Not only is Mary in herself a power so terrible to hell, but how many other powers are prepared, awaiting only her command to fight against hell!

A general and his soldiers are filled with still greater dismay when they perceive the approaching commander to be at the head of a mighty army, valiant, experienced in warfare, and in every respect superior to their own. Mary is the queen of angels, of whom each one has baffled and triumphed over Lucifer.

Let us call to mind the arrogance of Sennacherib who, relying on the strength of his armies, contemned God, and, as it were, challenged Him to combat. The following day 185,000 corpses were strewn around Jerusalem. In one night they were slain by one single angel whom God had sent, and Jerusalem was delivered. I make the application and say: All the angels look up to Mary as their queen, and they are prepared to fight against hell at any moment, when there is question of the salvation of a soul who implores the protection of the mother of God.

Thus it occurred at one time that a number of evil spirits besieged the death-bed of a woman who, in her agony, called upon Mary. Mary summoned Michael, the archangel. He, accompanied by numerous angels, advanced towards the dying person, and the evil spirits fled in dismay.

So also St. Francis Jerome, dying, cast a glance on an image of the Blessed Virgin, and sighed: "O Mary, thou who hast ever been my refuge, protect me in

this hour!" And lo! his countenance became radiant, and, bowing to the image of the Virgin, he said joyfully: "Now all is right—Magnificat"—and his spirit was released.

Just as a person is terrified and draws back when a flash of lightning has struck something near him, so also Satan retreats, when, in temptation, we call upon Mary. This is affirmed by Thomas a Kempis.

A general is filled with dread if he is aware that the commander who opposes him possesses more strategic *talents* than he, and is thereby better fitted to command. Lucifer knows full well that he has such an opponent in Mary, the queen of the cherubim, the seat of heavenly wisdom, the wisest of virgins.

And when a general knows that his opponent has often fought, and has always been *victorious*, this knowledge especially strikes terror into his soul. But count the victories of Mary.

St. Bernard could in truth address the Blessed Virgin thus: "O Mary, it is unheard of, that any one has fled to thy protection or sought thy mediation without obtaining relief." And does not the Church refer these words also to Mary: "Whoever seeks me will find life, and obtain salvation from the Lord?" And the holy Fathers unanimously declare that the veneration of the Blessed Virgin is a sure pledge of perseverance in the hour of death. It is indeed a highly consoling thought expressed by the spiritual writers, that no one for whom Mary has once offered her prayers to God will be lost. Mary obtains for

those souls the grace of conversion and of perseverance to the end ; that is, if we earnestly desire to do all that Mary requires of us. And what these requirements are, can be inferred from the words she addressed to the waiters in the dining-hall at Canaan: "Do all that He bids you to do;" that is to say, if we have but the sincere good-will to follow Christ in the manner in which the Church teaches us, then we may expect every thing from the Blessed Virgin, even if the bringing about of our conversion required a miracle.

It is especially the devotion to Mary in her Immaculate Conception, which proves a powerful weapon in our strife against hell. If you are severely tempted, say one Ave every night and morning, in honor of the Immaculate Conception. Call on the Blessed Virgin in the hour of temptation, and you will be victorious.

When *confidence* fills the warrior's breast, then may it be said that victory is assured. And we certainly will not lack this feeling of confidence if we place ourselves under the victorious banner of Mary, for she is the mother of the children of God, and the mother of sweet hope.

May the Blessed Virgin so dispose our hearts in fighting for God, and for the salvation of our immortal souls, that with her we may conquer and be crowned! Amen!

FEAST OF CHRISTMAS.

FIRST SERMON.

“And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying: Glory to God in the highest!”—Luke 2.

“PRAISE be to God on high!” This was the jubilant cry of myriads of angels at the annunciation of the birth of the divine Child,—the promised Saviour of the world.

Who is there among us that would not be glad to have listened with the watching shepherds to the hymn of the heavenly host, and heard the joyous tidings that his Redeemer was come?

We have by far more reason to rejoice at the eternal decree which sent to our fallen race a Redeemer, a Saviour—far more than the angels who had never forfeited their supernatural destiny, nor the gifts and graces of their primitive righteousness.

For, as St. Paul tells us, it was not the fallen angels, but the race of Adam that the arm of God's infinite mercy had seized.

Let us therefore, to-day, consider the special graces which we have received through Christ, and for which our Gloria of thanksgiving should ascend to heaven.

(19)

O Mary, queen of angels, mother of Jesus, offer our homage to thy divine Son, and obtain for us that our lives may be a token of that gratitude which a creature owes to his God and Redeemer!

I speak in the holy name of Jesus, to the greater honor of God!

“And when He bringeth in the first begotten into the world, all the angels of God will adore Him.” Thus wrote St. Paul in his Epistle to the Hebrews. And so indeed it was. Christ comes into the world in the stillness of night, and behold! an angel of God, illumined with the brightness of heavenly splendor, announces to the shepherds the birth of the Saviour; and a host of the heavenly spirits hover near him, and with him entone the Gloria: “Glory be to God in the highest!” The entire space between earth and the highest heaven is thronged with angels innumerable. Blessed Michael, the archangel, and the other heavenly chiefs surround the manger, and unite with all the choirs in rendering homage to the divine Child, as to their God and King.

The first motive which caused their spirits to be filled with joy at the sight of the divine Infant, was His *Personality* as regarded in itself.

As is testified by the book of Job, the angels rejoiced when God called the visible world into existence; and with good reason, for the whole exterior world is a reflection of the divine power, wisdom, grandeur, goodness, and majesty. If the view of the

earth and of the starry heavens fills even us with admiration, and causes our spirits to be lost in amazement at the power and wisdom of God, must not the angels have wondered still more? For the various forces of nature, with which we become acquainted only by degrees, were no mystery at all to them; all things were distinctly visible to the eyes of the angel world.

But in what an infinitely higher degree must not the view of the divine Infant have disposed them to offer praise to God. They beheld in the child lying in the manger before them, the Creator of the world, wonderfully uniting the divine and human nature, in the person of the Son of God. They beheld, reflected in this divine Child, all those infinite perfections of God, the contemplation of which has been to them a source of happiness since the day of their creation. Although He appears to men but a feeble Child, they beheld in Him, at the same time, the omnipotence of God: although He seemed not possessed of knowledge, yet they saw in Him the infinite wisdom of God. In this Infant scarcely born they already beheld infinite holiness; in this poor Infant, the majesty, glory, and magnificence of the King of heaven and earth; in this suffering Child they beheld effused the divine happiness and delight. They beheld in Jesus their King, whose prerogatives outshine the splendor of all the angelic choirs. They had reason to rejoice, and to give honor to God for this the greatest of all His miracles.

It is true, it is not granted to us here on earth to

view the prerogatives of the Infant Jesus in this same clear light; and yet I say we have greater cause than had the angels to rejoice at the sight of the divine Child. For this Infant is no angel, but a human being; this Child did not assume the nature of an angel, but that of man; He is true man as He is true God. Notwithstanding all the glory of the angels they are only allowed to call Jesus their king, but not their brother. We, on the contrary, through Christ, were not only made children of God, but also His brothers. What a pledge of our glorification among the angels, if one day we be permitted to be in communion with them in heaven! If the angels, as it were, form the body of the heavenly crown, we, the sons of men, will be the precious stones adorning it.

There is another reason why our joy should exceed that of the angels. Though man may mourn the loss of a valuable gift, still, if that gift be restored to him augmented in value, and with the assurance that he is to keep it for the remainder of his life, his joy is redoubled.

The angels were in possession of heaven and retained it. We, on the contrary, through the fall of Adam, *lost sanctifying grace and heaven* at the same time, and from being children of God, we became the slaves of Satan. What a loss, and how sad the condition of our souls!

But through Christ we have regained sanctifying grace, and have obtained the privilege of again being children of God and heirs to the kingdom of heaven,

a heaven where now a still greater glorification awaits us, than if we had never lost it. What a motive for joy beyond the joy of the angels!

Through the fall of Adam, and the loss of sanctifying grace, the natural powers of our souls were weakened. This was never the case with the holy angels. The *understanding* of man was dimmed in matters pertaining to his salvation; his will weakened, his heart bowed down with grief and care.

But cast a glance at the divine Infant. Through Christ, as children of the Church, our understanding is enlightened by the light of divine revelation.

Our *will* was weakened. But glance at the divine Child. Through Christ we are permitted to say with St. Paul: "I can do all things in Him who strengthens me." Verily, by His grace man is strong enough and enabled to lead the life of angels even in this world by the practice of the evangelical counsels.

After one victory the angels had no opportunity of gaining new triumphs, and thereby attaining a higher degree of glory. We have this opportunity in the struggle with passion and temptation; we can ever gain new merits for heaven, and increase our glory by the practice of virtue. What an inducement for us to sing songs of gladness, more joyous than the angels' Gloria!

The fall of Adam deprived us of paradise, and transformed this earth into a vale of tears and sorrows. A similar loss the angels never experienced, therefore they never had an opportunity of suffering. But

to endure sorrow and tribulation for God's sake, is a means of proving our faithful and constant love to God, in a manner in which the angels never could manifest it. It is exactly the endurance of these sufferings, which will one day prove the heaviest weight in the balance of our celestial joys. What a motive to rejoice even more than did the angels at the birth of Christ!

Finally, the sin of Adam brought on *death*; its terrors were never known to the angels, and yet, if in the hour of death we unite our will to that of divine Providence, we may one day be permitted to exclaim exultingly: "Death! where is thy sting? It was lost in the victory of Him Who has risen gloriously." Our entrance into the joys of eternal life has therefore become more meritorious for us. And for this reason, children of the Church, let us go to the manger and entone the Gloria of the angels with fullest joy; and let us petition the Infant Jesus to grant us this one grace, namely: that in us may also be accomplished the words of the angel: "On earth peace to men of good will."

We are of good will, Infant Jesus! Amen!

SECOND SERMON.

"And the shepherds said one to another: Let us go over to Bethlehem, and let us see this word that has come to pass, which the Lord hath showed to us,"—Luke 2.

THE joyous feast of Christmas once more fills with gladness the hearts of the children of the Church. It is the feast which bears the significant name of the gracious nativity of our Lord and Redeemer Jesus Christ. For, in truth, the incarnation and birth of the Son of God are the source of all the graces which we have received through His life here on earth, and through His death.

But that these graces may really serve unto our salvation, depends upon the care with which we dispose ourselves to receive them, and upon the earnestness of our co-operation.

To understand the nature of that co-operation, which may prove meritorious, we need only glance at the shepherds, and consider their mode of acting when the angel addressed to them the words imparting the glad tidings of the birth of the world's Redeemer: To-day is born for you the Redeemer of the world—go to Bethlehem, and you will find the Infant lying in the manger. "Yes, let us go to Bethlehem," said they; and they hastened thither and found the child with Mary and Joseph.

A study of the conduct of the shepherds will show us how we may derive permanent profit from the holy feast

of Christmas, and what dispositions we should have to receive with fruit the inspirations of grace.

O Mary, look down upon us with that condescension with which thou didst regard the shepherds the first among the faithful, who paid homage to thy divine Child!

I speak in the holy name of Jesus, to the greater honor of God!

In the first place, they were *watchful* shepherds. The inhabitants of Bethlehem were asleep; the shepherds were watching. This circumstance points to the first condition necessary to really perceive the call of grace, namely: we must walk in the presence of God in recollection of spirit.

Why is it we feel so few inspirations of grace? Because we are not watchful.

Christ says: Blessed are the servants whom the Lord finds watching. Even those who call themselves children of the Church, generally lead a life of carelessness; they are men of habit, they fulfill the duties of their state as Christians, but only superficially, and are mainly engaged in devising plans for the increase of their worldly profits. But how little attention at prayer and in the performance of their other religious duties! How often they fail to recognize and receive the inspirations of the Holy Ghost! This indolence and sleepiness in the service of God also prevents us from clearly seeing those faults which, through care-

lessness, precipitation, or impatience, find their way into our ordinary actions.

Such lukewarm, sleepy souls also lose many opportunities of performing works of charity, and do not interest themselves in the least about the spiritual or temporal welfare of their neighbor.

The shepherds of that Christmas night were resolute men, *resolute* servants of the Lord. They did not say: Oh, it is night, and we had better wait till day-break! No; but when they heard the words of the angel, they resolved to carry out at once the instructions given.

Why is it, that in so many cases the inspirations of the Holy Ghost remain fruitless? I reply: Strong will is wanting, a strong will to accomplish not only in part but wholly all that we know to be the will of God, without wavering or excuse. This want of determination is an obstacle to the efficacy of grace, and prevents its bearing fruit.

This weakness of will and want of resolution comes from an excessive care for temporal things, from an undue fear of mortal man; and finally from the difficulties connected with the accomplishment of a good work.

When the angel announced the glad tidings to the shepherds, they were tending their sheep; and yet they did not hesitate to leave their flocks and hasten to Bethlehem to seek the divine Child.

How different the conduct of the majority of men when there is question of some worldly gain! They

are all anxiety. They listen with eagerness to every advice, to every word regarding the advancement of their temporal affairs; but they are, so to say, blind and deaf, when the question of attending to their spiritual interests is urged upon them.

The shepherds determined upon going, and did not stop to consider what the inhabitants of Bethlehem might say when they came there to make inquiries for the Child,—to salute an Infant born in a rude stable, and to adore Him as the promised Messiah, the heir of the family of David.

The *fear of man* is, alas! the reason why so many fail in their courage to follow the inspirations of grace.

What will people say? is the discouraging impediment opposing them on all sides. They have an idea that if they walk fearlessly in the way of salvation the children of the world will regard them as ignorant, as slaves of the priests. And yet what little cause have we to fear the children of this world, who, in spiritual matters, are so ignorant and so short-sighted. If God is with us, who can be against us, or who can harm us?

The shepherds continued to listen to the echo of the Gloria which the angels sang, and thus assured themselves that God was with them.

It was not a very pleasant task to wander through the streets of Bethlehem at night, to awaken the inhabitants from their slumbers, and make inquiries concerning the newly-born Child. But they disregarded

these difficulties and obstacles, and hastened onward without delay.

What so frequently renders the inspirations of grace fruitless, is our deficiency in *self-denial*; our love of ease is the great obstacle. It is true, we make good resolutions at times, but we postpone the fulfillment of them, and thus never accomplish them.

The shepherds found the Infant and adored Him, and offered Him their hearts; and, as tradition teaches, they also presented Him with such gifts as their poverty would allow.

That which gives efficacy to the inspirations of grace, is the *spirit of prayer* and of devotion in our spiritual intercourse with Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. But it is especially the intercourse we hold with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. Yes, here is Bethlehem, the city of bread, where Jesus lies in the tabernacle as in a crib, shrouded in the white raiments of the sacramental species. What a fountain of grace here discloses itself to our view! Would that we but profited by it as we might!

We really have no cause to envy the shepherds their happiness, in being allowed to behold the Infant Jesus once, and to adore Him. We are permitted to visit the same Infant Jesus every day, and even to receive Him into our hearts. Thus our hearts become, as it were, the crib, and we are enabled through Christ, as children of God, to taste of heaven's joys, even while yet living on this earth.

The shepherds praised and *thanked* God for the favor they had received.

Not without reason does the Church call the Blessed Sacrament the Sacrament of thanksgiving.

O Infant Jesus, filled with these sentiments we prostrate ourselves before Thee with the shepherds, and with them we worship Thee! Bless us, as Thou hast blessed them, and save us through the power and the graces of Thy coming into this world! Amen!

THIRD SERMON.

"There was no room for them in the inn."—Luke 2.

THE joyous feast of the nativity of Jesus Christ reminds us of the greatest of divine deeds; namely, The entrance of the Creator into the world which He created, which He wished to reconcile to Himself by the incarnation of the Son of God, and thus at the same time redeem the fallen race of man, and rescue it from the abyss of eternal destruction.

But to prepare for His entrance into this world, a series of wonderful events occurred in accordance with the divine decree, such as: The preservation of Noah in the ark; the election of Abraham; the sending of Moses, the lawgiver of the Old Testament; the deliverance of the people of Israel, by signs and miracles the most astonishing; the imparting of the law on Mt. Sinai amid thunder and lightning; the manna from heaven which served the people as nourishment for forty years; the sending of the prophets with the intimation that the time was drawing nigh in which the Saviour was to come. "Drop down dew, ye heavens, and ye clouds rain down the Just." Thus they sighed and united their petition with that of the whole human race, longing to be released from the bonds of sin and its consequences.

Four thousand years were consumed in this preparation, and still when He, whom Jacob had designated "the desire of the eternal hills," really came,

the world did not receive its Redeemer and Deliverer. "He came into His own, and His own received Him not."

And even as regards the children of the Church, how many of them might be reproached with these same words of the evangelist: "He came into His own, and His own received Him not!" And why? To this I will reply to-day.

O Mary, queen of prophets, who with such ardent desire hast of the Holy Ghost conceived thy Lord and Redeemer, and to whom thou hast so entirely unclosed thy heart, when He rested underneath it, obtain for us the grace that Christ may also enter our hearts, and make them His home forever!

I speak in the holy name of Jesus, to the greater honor of God!

"He came into His own, and His own received Him not," said the evangelist. Alas! it was so, it is so at present, and will probably remain so till the consummation of ages.

Christ enters this world, and Bethlehem bars its gates. Three kingly sages adore Him, and Herod already seeks to destroy His life. Christ enters upon His public career, and the wrath of the Pharisees, priests, and scribes is enkindled. More than once they sought to take away His life, and finally went so far as to crucify Him!

In the same manner the heathens opposed the an-

nouncement of the Gospel. Instead of joyfully greeting and joining the Church, they brandished the sword of persecution against it, and during three hundred years they hunted down every confessor of the holy faith. The blood of millions flowed, until finally the cross adorned the crown of the Roman emperors.

For nineteen hundred years the Pagans have persistently opposed the spread of the Holy Church. To this hour they wage a persecution of blood against those who profess the name of Jesus and worship Him as the Redeemer of the world.

But those especially deserve our pity, who, calling themselves children of the Church, and exteriorly professing their faith, yet banish Jesus, their Saviour, from their hearts. To these the words of the evangelist point, where he says : "There was no room for them at the inn."

The human heart can but too well be compared to an *inn* which is filled with a number of guests, and from the interior of which resound the words which refuse our Lord admittance: There is no room here for you! Pass on!

The door of an inn is constantly open. There is a continual coming and going, and the character of the guests is not inquired into. It is no place for prayer, or the fulfillment of one's religious duties; on the contrary, we find there only tumult and continual restlessness.

Thus it is with the heart of him who leads a life in

compliance with the spirit of the world. Such a heart is open to all that passes; all sorts of inordinate desires find their way into it, so that there is no room for Jesus to find therein a permanent abode.

But certainly this does not hinder the Infant Jesus from again knocking, and attempting still to find a place for Himself in the deluded heart of man. By His inspirations He knocks repeatedly at the door of the heart, and exclaims: Open your heart!—Who are you, and what do you wish? is the question from within. The Infant Jesus replies: Look at me, lying in a poor manger in a stable. I have come to disengage your heart from love of riches, to teach you the love and practice of the virtue of *poverty*. The worldling answers: Go, there is no room here for you. Could a different answer be expected? The worldling's love is centered on his money, his attention on the increase of his temporal possessions. What a multitude of thoughts, desires, plans, and projects keep him busy! There is no vacant spot for the poor Infant Jesus.

Jesus knocks at the heart of the worldling.—What do you wish?—Open thy heart, that I may make my home with thee. I would like to teach you to love and practise the virtue of *humility*. But the worldling wishes to hear nothing of humility; his heart is filled with a longing for esteem and glory, with self-praise, self-will, and self-love.

What a tumult reigns in such a heart! Innumerable thoughts of vain desires, of vain ambition come

and go. No room for you, says the deluded worldling ; pass on !

Jesus knocks at the door of the heart.—What do you wish?—Open ; let me in. I will teach you to despise all sensual, worldly pleasures, and to practise the spirit of self-denial ; to mortify yourself, and to bear with patience all your trials and tribulations. I wish to replenish your heart with a true love of the *cross*.—"Depart as quickly as possible," says the terrified worldling from behind the door of his heart ; "no room for you !" Oh, not to suffer, not to renounce, but to enjoy myself,—this is his watch-word ! He burns with the desire of spending his entire life in the enjoyment of earthly delights and pleasures. Suffering Child, pass on ; no room here for you !

The Infant Jesus again knocks.—Open your heart.—What do you desire?—Allow me to enter. I will teach you to love retirement, to practise *prayer*, and thus to live on earth as if you were already in heaven, eternally united with Me.—No room for you ; begone ! resounds from the inn of the human heart. It is only fond of intercourse with men ; it is full of human respect, full of the fear of man.

Finally, the Infant Jesus raps at the door of the heart.—Open—What do you wish?—I desire you to assist Me in spreading My kingdom on earth ; to convert sinners ; to *gain souls*.—Pass on, is the answer from the inner heart. Why should I trouble myself about others ? I am no priest. It makes very little difference to the lukewarm Christian whether others

are treading the path of salvation; he may even go so far as to say all religions are alike; let each one believe what he chooses. Poor heart! Certainly, Jesus will leave you. But no, Infant Jesus, do not depart! See, we open to Thee our hearts; enter, and take up Thy abode therein, until the gates of heaven open for us, and we make our home with Thee amid the rejoicings of the blessed for ever and for ever! Amen!

FEAST OF ST. STEPHEN.

FIRST SERMON.

“I am Jesus standing on the right hand of God.”—Acts of the Apos. 7.

THE Church celebrates to-day the feast of St. Stephen, the proto-martyr, as he is designated, because he had the happiness to be the first one among all the disciples and apostles of Christ to seal his faith with his blood. Therefore St. Stephen is one of those privileged saints for whom every Catholic cherishes a particular devotion.

Yes, holy martyr St. Stephen, we need but to mention thy name, and every Christian feels encouraged to profess his faith with thee, even at the cost of his blood.

Though all may not have the happiness to shed their blood for their faith, still we must all undergo a certain martyrdom in its defense; and one, in many cases, even more painful than the martyrdom of blood. “All who desire to live devoutly in Christ will suffer persecution;” thus St. Paul addressed all Christians, without exception.

St. Stephen, in the midst of torments cried out: “I see Jesus!” Let us to-day, before the crib of our Lord, consider these words.

Mary, queen of martyrs, thou who hast through thy unbloody martyrdom gained the royal crown of the martyrs, obtain for us the grace that, with St. Stephen, we may be victorious in our combat for Christ!

I speak in the holy name of Jesus, to the greater honor of God!

“If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you;” “The disciple is no better than the master.” Thus Christ Himself assures us. “I am the way, and he who follows Me will have life eternal.” There is no other path to heaven, but the one which Christ hath trodden before us.

But Christ has entered heaven by His cross and sufferings; so for us there is no way to gain heaven, save that of self-denial, of mortification, and of the cross.

This path Christ began to tread even at His birth; He continued on it throughout His whole life; until at length, weighed down by the cross, He reaches Golgotha, there to be stretched on the cross, and bleeding from innumerable wounds to breathe his last.

Even if Christ had not said any thing in regard to the manner in which we should follow Him, His example alone would show us that there is no other way to heaven but the way of the cross patiently borne.

Every one who meditates on the model of His Redeemer, must feel what St. Bernard felt when he

said: "I would be ashamed to be a sensual member under a head crowned with thorns."

St. Bernard and all the saints were sensible of the meaning of these words of Christ: "Whoever wishes to imitate Me, must take up his cross daily and follow Me." Mark well, He says daily. His Providence provides daily crosses for all men, for prince and for peasant.

And to convince ourselves that our daily domestic trials and crosses, when borne for love of Christ, may assume the character of martyrdom, and that they may at times prove even more painful than the martyrdom of blood, we need only examine the circumstances of real life as it exists about us.

And, first of all, I would call your attention to the state of poverty, of anxiety for *daily bread*, which presses upon the large majority of mankind.

Many of you have, perhaps, experienced this yourselves. Uncertainty and anxiety about the food and clothing of the morrow have induced millions of persons to leave Europe, amid the greatest sacrifices of the heart, and to people America.

And what were these sacrifices? Separation from loved ones; the hardships of the journey; privations on landing on a foreign soil; want of employment; no opportunity even offered you of providing for yourself and your family. Oh, cruel martyrdom!

But hearken to St. Stephen as he raises his eyes to heaven, and, filled with consolation and joy, exclaims: "I behold Jesus standing at the right hand of God."

Glance at the Infant Jesus at the right hand of His mother, wrapt in swaddling clothes, and say to yourself: *Poor* Infant Jesus, although Thou art the Son of God, yet Thou art lying in a poor manger. I unite my poverty with Thine. God will provide for me and mine for Thy sake, because I belong to Thee. Do this, look upon Jesus, and you will be comforted.

Another situation very trying to our patience, and one which may make of our life an unbloody martyrdom, are the torments which our *intercourse* with others inflict upon us. It sometimes happens that they who are nearest to us, who live under the same roof with us, to whom we have shown kindness, are the very ones who reward our love and charity towards them, by injuring and offending us in every possible manner. This is a cross often harder to bear than solicitude for a livelihood. How many a wife, how many a mother, how many a husband, how many a father is, perhaps, here among us who could testify to this!

Woman, what is it grieves you more, what pains you even more than the sufferings of poverty? It is the conduct of your godless husband, and of your disobedient children. How cheerfully and willingly would you live on scanty bread and water, if you possessed but a good, God-fearing, sympathizing husband, and kind, dutiful children. But remember St. Stephen and his words: "I see Jesus at the right hand of the Father." Cast your eyes on the Infant Jesus in the manger. He came into this world, and with what in-

difference and ingratitude did the world receive Him! He is scornfully called the transgressor of the law—a breaker of the Sabbath; He is denominated the friend of sinners, He who came into this world to destroy the kingdom of sin; He is called an instigator and seducer of the people. He calls Himself the out-cast, the last among the children of men. One of His disciples betrays Him, and He is sold for an ignominious price, and finally He is crucified between two murderers by the same people who, but a few days before had greeted Him with the cry of Hosannah! Meditate upon all this, you who are wounded by ingratitude; look at Jesus, and you will be comforted.

What, in the last place, constitutes our unbloody martyrdom, is *sickness*, and finally *death itself*. In comparison with painful and protracted disease the tortures of martyrdom are, as it were, trivial and insignificant. The martyrdom of blood very frequently occupies but a few moments, whereas the unbloody martyrdom often lasts for years and years.

As far as death is concerned, it is true that all who die a martyr's death, enter heaven immediately. On the contrary, the majority of those who die in consequence of sickness, will, with very few exceptions, have to suffer in purgatory. Nevertheless, if in our last hour, we unite ourselves wholly to the will of God, and desire to suffer and die because God wills it, such a union with the holy will of God could probably save us from purgatory, and procure our immediate entrance into heaven.

For this reason St. John represented to himself all the elect bearing palms in ~~their~~ hands as a symbol of martyrdom. And in truth all the blessed in heaven gave evidence of their faith in Christ by the sufferings they endured for His sake.

St. Stephen, obtain for us from God your love of Jesus, so that, imitating Him by a life of sacrifice, we may one day gain the palm of victory! Amen!

SECOND SERMON.

“Stephen was a man full of faith, and of the Holy Ghost.”—Acts 6.

ST. STEPHEN was chosen in accordance with the wish of the Apostles, that, as deacon, he might assist them in the administration of their sacred charge. The people did not find themselves mistaken in their choice, for Holy Scripture gives St. Stephen this testimony: “Stephen was a man full of the Holy Ghost.”

Beloved in Christ, last year I called your attention to the fact, that it is the duty of every Christian to be a martyr for his faith in Christ. It is true, not every one meets with an opportunity of sealing his faith with his blood; but, as I have explained to you, there is a twofold martyrdom—a bloody and an unbloody martyrdom—and the latter is often a better proof than the former, of our virtue, of our love for God and for our neighbor; of our patience, self-denial, and also of the complete union of our will with that of the holy will of God.

But what enables us thus to suffer, to combat, and to be victorious, is the grace of the Holy Ghost coming to us through those channels which we call the seven gifts. And the sun which darts these seven rays into our souls is our holy faith.

But this, our faith, must not be merely a nominal faith, a mere acknowledgment of the lips, but a faith which is proven by actions; for the just man, says St. Paul, lives by faith.

This was the case with St. Stephen; his was a lively faith, an active, sacrificing, a constant, and conquering faith. Our faith should be the same.

O Mary, queen of martyrs, whom Elizabeth called Blessed, because thou didst believe, obtain for us the grace, that during our lives we may evince the same strong faith as did St. Stephen!

I speak in the holy name of Jesus, to the greater honor of God!

St. Stephen sealed his faith with his blood; and in this he should serve us as a model, if God were ever to demand the same testimony of us. But, besides, he evinced his active faith during his whole life, and in this we should especially follow him. But, alas! what a number of those who call themselves Christians might be reproached with the words of our Lord: "Thou hast the name that thou livest, but thou art dead in spirit!"

Let not the faith you profess be a nominal faith, one which exercises little or no influence on your life.

How many there are who, though they hear Mass on Sunday, pass the rest of the week in gross vice and in giving scandal!

To how many non-Catholics has the wickedness of their lives given occasion to turn away from the Church. The Church, of course, deplores and censures the conduct of her degenerate children, but the non-Catholic often does not take time to consider this.

The faith of St. Stephen was a *lively* faith. This is seen in the sanctity of his life.

When the Apostles desired the people to choose some men who might be ordained as co-laborers in their holy charge, the prominent virtues of St. Stephen determined them to place his name before the Apostles; and he was the first one chosen. "He was a man full of the Holy Spirit," as Holy Scripture testifies.

He was, in the first place, full of the fear of the Lord—devoid of the fear of man; his only fear was to offend God. He proved this by the manner in which he, like the Apostles, intrepidly stood before the council of the Jews.

He was a man of piety, of wisdom, of counsel, of strength; full of the knowledge of his faith, and full of that divine wisdom which shone forth in his sincere love for God and for his neighbor.

How completely his soul was replenished with these graces, is proven by one miracle in particular, by which the Lord glorified His servant in the face of his enemies. When his enemies and judges were unable to withstand the power of his argument in favor of the truth of his holy faith, his countenance became radiant, as Scripture tells us, and shone like that of an angel.

It was an intimation from above that Stephen, even while on this earth, lived wholly in the spirit of the prayer which Christ has taught us: "Lord, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." Yes, St. Ste-

phen's was a lively faith, because it exercised a holy influence on his life.

But it was also an *active* faith; that is, a faith which actuated him to procure for others, also, the blessing of faith,—a duty which is imposed upon every true child of the Church by this commandment: "Love thy neighbor as thyself."

If, therefore, it is our duty to assist our neighbor in his temporal wants and distresses with the same eagerness with which we desire to help ourselves, how much more urgent is this duty as regards his spiritual wants, his eternal salvation!

What would it avail, even if we had rescued our neighbor from temporal misery; if we had procured for him all the treasures, all the honors and crowns of this world; if we had delivered him from a painful illness; yes, if when blind, deaf, dumb, and lame, we had restored his sight, hearing, speech, and the use of his limbs,—what would all this amount to if we had not assisted him in matters pertaining to his salvation?

As deacon, St. Stephen appeared to live only for the bodily welfare of the poor, to care for all with universal love, without regard to nationality or to relationship; but he was also especially active, both day and night, in preaching, defending, and spreading the faith.

His zeal was so great that it attracted the attention of the enemies of Christ, and inflamed their wrath against him, so that he was the first one whom they persecuted, and whose blood they caused to flow.

Reflecting upon the example of St. Stephen, upon his ardent zeal in the propagation of the Church, and in saving souls, many a child of the Church has cause to blush. Many imagine they are very good, and act wisely, if they assist their neighbor in his temporal necessities, without troubling themselves in the least whether others are treading the path to heaven, or are on the broad road which leads to eternal perdition.

To spread the faith, to convert heretics and infidels,—this is something which they regard as out of their sphere, as something that belongs to priests only.

But this is not the active faith which animated St. Stephen and the primitive Christians.

And if we inquire into the cause why so many lead a life of such carelessness in regard to the spiritual welfare of others, we will find it to be their want of *self-denial* and sacrifice, their unwillingness to take upon themselves the difficulties and cares incumbent upon a life of zeal.

St. Stephen was self-sacrificing. He did not shun any labor or exertion in assisting his neighbor, and propagating the faith. He despised the threats that were directed against him; yes, scorned even death itself.

Courage is wanting to so many Christians of the present day. They live on, and let others do the same, even if it be the cause of the eternal ruin of some souls.

We forget but too often that, as faithful Christians,

we are children of the Church militant ; that this life is a continual strife, and that only he, who has fought and conquered, will one day be a member of the Church triumphant.

“I will give the victor the crown,” says Christ.

How many there are who justly reproach Protestants for maintaining the pernicious and false doctrine, that faith alone is necessary to salvation; and yet imagine their salvation assured, because they believe the Catholic doctrine, even if, in other respects, they lead the lives of the greatest sinners.

St. Stephen, who by thy holy life hast proven thyself so glorious a model for the children of the Apostolic Church, to encourage them to give testimony of their faith, pray for us and all the children of the Church, especially at the present time, that we may prize the gift of our holy faith more than all the treasures of the world, and that we may also *prove* our faith by a holy and zealous life, so that with thee we may one day be crowned in heaven ! Amen !

THIRD SERMON.

“And the saying was liked by all the multitude, and they chose Stephen.”
—Acts 6.

IT is apparent from several allusions in Holy Scripture, that the names which Providence has assigned to various persons, frequently have a reference to their lives and vocations. Thus the name of Adam and Eve were significant, and still more so the names of Abraham, John, and, above all, the holy name of Jesus.

And as regards the name of the saint whose memory the Church celebrates to-day, we see to our comfort and encouragement the reference which it bears to his life in the kingdom of God. It is a Greek name, and signifies the crown.

His name God chose to be at the head of the seventeen millions of martyrs of the first three centuries;—yes, of all the millions who, during these nineteen hundred years, have shed their blood for Christ and His Church.

And that we may to-day more clearly conceive what a glorious crown now adorns St. Stephen among the hosts of the saints, let us reflect upon the twelve stars which, during his life, ornamented his crown of virtue, and which shone with brilliancy, especially in the martyr's death.

O Mary, Queen of Martyrs, who desirest nothing so

much as that thy children of the Church militant, may, after a virtuous life, be crowned in heaven with thee, obtain for us the grace to battle and conquer with St. Stephen; and so to live and die, that our crown of recompense may also one day shine in brightest splendor in the kingdom of the saints!

I speak in the holy name of Jesus, to the greater honor of God.

“I saw a woman in heaven, crowned with twelve stars, and the dragon at her feet.” Thus St. John the Evangelist beholds Mary, the patroness of the Church, the queen of all the saints, and especially of martyrs.

So in the crown of glory which now adorns St. Stephen in heaven, we have twelve stars of virtue which shone even during the life of the saint, but which, as I have said, shone in fullest splendor in his martyrdom.

The first of these stars of virtue, was the star of holy *faith*. St. Stephen was a man full of faith; this honorable mention is made of him even in Scripture, and of this, the choice that was made of him as deacon of the Holy Church, gave glorious testimony. He preached the word of God with such apostolic vigor, with such energy and erudition, that, as we read in the Acts of the Apostles, the enemies of the faith could not withstand the force of his speech. The star of faith sparkled with peculiar brilliancy in his martyrdom. Holy Scripture affirms, that the members of the council stopped their ears, so as not to hear the speech of Stephen,

fearing lest they would be converted, and compelled to acknowledge Jesus to be the promised Messiah.

The second star which sparkled in the glorious crown of St. Stephen, was the star of holy *hope*.

This star shone through his whole life; and yet St. Stephen had no advantages or joys to expect in this world. On the contrary, his vocation brought with it naught but trouble, labor, persecution, and suffering.

And how much more brilliantly shone the light of this star in his crown of martyrdom! "I see," he exclaimed—"I see the heavens open, and Jesus at the right hand of God."

The third star which adorned the crown of St. Stephen in this life, was his love of God. It is said of this *love*: "Love is strong as death, and many waters can not extinguish it. And should man sacrifice his all for love, he would consider this is naught." St. Stephen proved to the letter this strength of true love. In order to labor for the kingdom of God, and to follow his vocation, he was obliged to renounce many things, and place many a sacrifice on the altar of God. But he proved his love of God especially by his death, by which he offered himself as a holocaust to his Lord.

The fourth star which glistened in the crown of St. Stephen, which shone gloriously in his death, and will shine for all eternity in his heavenly crown, was the star of his ardent and faithful *love of Jesus*.

St. Stephen devoted himself entirely to following

Christ, to glorifying His holy name, and to spreading His kingdom on earth. He seemed to work and care for nothing else; he thought of nothing else. Jesus was his thought, his desire, his care, his consolation, and his hope. And with what splendor did this star of love for Jesus shine forth in the martyr's agony! "I see Jesus," was his joyful cry. "Oh! I die willingly; I long to be dissolved, and be with Christ." Happy St. Stephen!

The fifth star which embellished his crown, was his *zeal* in the practice of all the virtues of his state.

God himself gave testimony of his servant's holiness, when St. Stephen, surrounded by those who had pronounced the sentence of death against him was wrapt in ecstasy, and his countenance shone with the beauty of an angel.

The sixth star of virtue which adorned the crown of St. Stephen during his life, and one which shone with such luster in his martyrdom, was heroic love for his *neighbor*. St. Stephen could, if he wished, have abandoned the dangerous burden of his apostolic duties during those days of persecution. But he remained bravely at his post. His love of Christ and his neighbor would not allow him to leave it. He was willing to endure all manner of persecution for love of others; yes, to offer life itself for them.

And this he did.

The seventh star which glitters in the crown of St. Stephen, is his fidelity in the performance of the duties of his *vocation*. He was sensitive of the opposi-

tion of his enemies; he perceived their growing hatred; and still he went on bravely, and without the least fear of man; he preached Jesus Crucified, ready to bear the rigors of persecution.

Glorious star! Singular star of virtue! And yet it is the one which should shine with exceptional brilliancy in the life of all who are chosen to preach the word of God, and to teach the way of salvation to the children of men.

The eighth star sparkling in the crown of St. Stephen's virtues, is the love of his *enemies*. How willing he was to pardon his enemies and persecutors, all the wrongs which malice and hatred of Christianity had inflicted upon him, is proven by the prayers which he uttered for his enemies—"Lord," he cried, "do not account it to them as sin."

The ninth star which illumined the crown of St. Stephen, was his tranquillity of soul, his *meekness*, his humility. How gloriously these virtues shone through all his sufferings and his martyrdom! His enemies, surrounding him, rage and gnash their teeth; but he remains unmoved in his submission to the holy will of God. He knows full well that his enemies, however furious, are unable to injure one hair of his head without the will of God.

The tenth star which sparkles in the crown of St. Stephen's virtues, and which shone radiantly in his martyrdom, is his union with God in *prayer*. Although the storm of persecution raged about him, yet his spirit remained calm and wrapt in devotion. He

prostrated himself, and prayed to God; he prayed for the salvation of his enemies.

The eleventh star which adds its luster to the crown of St. Stephen, is his *intrepidity* in the face of his enemies, judges, and murderers. No trace of cowardice, of the fear of man, is discernible in the life and death of St. Stephen.

The twelfth star, is his *fidelity* to the last.

He sacrifices his life in testimony to his faith.

Thus closed the career of St. Stephen; and every Christian heart, whilst reflecting upon his glorious martyrdom, will feel comforted and strengthened in the resolution, to follow his example by the practice of all those virtues whose merit shine so brilliantly in his crown of victory.

Let us strive during our whole life to practise these virtues with the same zeal as did St. Stephen, and they will glow as bright stars in the crown of recompense, with which our Lord will one day reward us in heaven! Amen!

FEAST OF ST. JOHN.

FIRST SERMON.

“Peter saw the disciple whom Jesus loved.”—John 21.

THE saints exercise a various influence on the hearts of the faithful, according to their various character, and the various vocations to which the Lord hath called them. There are saints, whose lives excite our amazement and admiration ; as, for instance, St. Simon the Stylite, who, for a number of years, remained in a standing position on a pillar ; or St. Peter of Alcantara, whose extreme penance filled even St. Teresa with astonishment. In the case of the saint whose memory the Church celebrates to-day, we feel our hearts drawn towards him. It is he of whom it is written, that he was the disciple whom Jesus loved, and who ranks high among the elect on account of his great love for his neighbor,—St. John the Evangelist.

I will take advantage of this hour to consider with you, why St. John called himself the disciple whom Jesus loved.

If we understand this, we will honor St. John by a still greater devotion, and we will follow his virtuous example with still greater fidelity.

O Mary, thou who hast so frequently blest thy

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foster-son St. John, and who hast guided him in his sublime destiny with maternal tenderness and care, show thyself also a mother to us!

I speak in the holy name of Jesus, to the greater honor of God!

In order to judge of the intensity of a person's love, we must consider the *favours* which he confers upon the person loved. Thus, in order to understand how ardently Jesus loved His mother, we need but consider with what prerogatives He has gifted her in preference to the angels and saints, and all other creatures. So with St. John.

Which are the prerogatives and privileges by which Christ has distinguished St. John from all other men, even the Apostles, and which serve as proofs of the particular love of our Lord for His disciple?

First, in respect to the person of St. John, he was fortunate in sharing with the Apostles and other disciples of our Lord the greatest favours, in preference to so many others.

St. John belonged to the chosen people, and according to the flesh, was descended from the family of Abraham, the father of the faithful. He enjoyed the happiness of living in the same country, and at the same time in which Christ was born. He had the supreme pleasure of seeing Him face to face. But he was to receive still greater privileges. He was one of the twelve whom Jesus chose from among the multitude of men to live in His immediate vicinity; to

be His companion. Thus he enjoyed the advantage of having the example of Christ daily before him, of listening to every word He preached; of witnessing all the miracles which He wrought. What a privilege! What a grace! It is true, the other Apostles shared these favors, and therefore Jesus called them all blessed. But St. John was yet to receive still greater favors, and more especial graces.

It is a pious saying, that St. John, whilst yet a child, was so fortunate as to have been an associate of the Infant Jesus, a favor which no other Apostle ever enjoyed. St. John was one of the three to whom our Lord revealed Himself at His transfiguration on Mt. Thabor. The other two were St. Peter and St. James. These three, among all the Apostles, were nearest to our Lord, and He spoke more frequently and more confidingly to them than to the other disciples and Apostles. Still, St. John enjoyed the most marked distinctions in preference to them, and these, without doubt, will be resplendent in heaven for all eternity.

The Gospel mentions *three* particular favors which were conferred upon him at the time when Jesus accomplished the work of our redemption; namely, at the last Supper, on Calvary, and after his ascension in the island of Patmos.

At the last Supper Christ instituted the Blessed Sacrament,—the sacrifice of the New Testament. Christ, surrounded by His Apostles, celebrated the first Holy Mass!

Here Jesus is seated, and on his bosom rests St. John. Who can form an idea of the many graces which poured into the soul of St. John on that evening? What an influence must not the recollection of this privilege have exercised on the entire life of the Apostle! Peter and the other Apostles became alarmed, and in a terrified manner put the question to Jesus: "Is it I?" But St. John, all imbued with the love of Christ, and confident that he was innocent of the guilt of treason, simply asked: Who is it?

What devotion must have filled his soul, when afterwards, as Apostle and Priest of the Lord, he offered the sacrifice of Mass, and thought of his proximity to Jesus at the last Supper! Who can conceive with what tender feelings of gratitude and affection, St. John must, in his after life, have received Jesus in the Holy Communion?

What soul, that really loves Jesus, does not envy St. John the privilege which our Saviour bestowed upon him?

The *second* place in which we behold St. John distinguished as the disciple whom Jesus loved, is on *Calvary*.

Who among us does not wish to have enjoyed the privilege of seeing Jesus on the cross, to have been near Him when He accomplished the work of redemption?

Of all the Apostles, St. John was the only one who had this unspeakable happiness.

But the greatest favor which Jesus granted St.

John, as a token of His love towards him, was His word spoken from the cross: "Woman, behold thy son! Son, behold thy mother!" Jesus committed St. John to His mother's care, and charged her to extend to him a mother's love. Oh, happy St. John! What a fountain of grace and merit opens itself to you by this testament of Christ on the cross!

It is accepted as an established principle, that if God grant a person a vocation, He will also give him the graces corresponding to this vocation. The extent of the love which Jesus cherished for His mother, is the measure of grace which He imparted to St. John, that he might perform the duties of a child towards such a mother.

If one person intrust another with some very important business, to which he himself can not attend, he pays him well, and he would rather give him a little more than less, so that he may feel assured that the work is done.

And, moreover, what a pledge did Jesus give the disciple of His love! He was to have the example of the Blessed Virgin constantly before him; she, who is the mirror of justice, and whose duty, as mother, was to see that St. John, her foster-son, fulfilled the duties of his vocation as perfectly as possible.

Where is there a pious mother who does not feel this obligation? Maternal love prompts her to take all possible care that her children be not lost.

Now, if it is a pious belief that no one, for whose salvation Mary has once offered her prayers, will be

lost, must not St. John have been assured of his salvation, since Mary, as his mother, was obliged to pray for him, to save him. St. Paul may well exclaim: "I chastise my body, so that after having preached to others, I may not myself be lost." St. John, as foster-son of Mary, was infallibly certain of his salvation.

Even after His ascension, Christ still continued His intercourse with St. John by divine revelations, and disclosed to him the mysteries of heaven.

Verily, St. John, thou art the disciple whom Jesus loved. But Jesus loves us also. Hence we may look for great graces, and should prepare ourselves to receive them with fruit! Amen!

SECOND SERMON.

“This is the disciple who leaned on Christ’s breast at Supper.”—John 21.

EVERY child, that has received some instruction, will immediately answer to the question: “Who is the disciple of whom it is written: This is the disciple whom Jesus loved?” It is St. John the Evangelist. He is deserving of this name, as is proven by the numerous favors by which Christ distinguished him from all the Apostles.

Last year we saw that we, too, as children of the Church, enjoy so many and such marked graces—which divine Providence through Christ has conferred upon us in preference to so many others—that it may well be said of us, that Jesus loves us.

But when we meditate upon the life of St. John, we may justly exclaim: Behold the disciple who loved Jesus; his whole life gave testimony of his love. And for us it will be of the greatest importance to imitate him in this respect. For, what would it have availed St. John, if Christ had granted him such great privileges, and treated him with such marked preference, if he had not reciprocated his Saviour’s love, and had not co-operated with the graces received, and thereby sanctified his life!

Judas, too, received marvelous and numerous graces, in preference to so many others; but on this account his downfall was the more hideous, nay terrible, his ruin more sad.

Judas wasted the graces which Christ effused into his heart; John made use of them.

Let us to-day reflect upon this, and let it serve as a warning and encouragement for us.

O Mary, who hast loved St. John with a mother's love; obtain for us the true love of Jesus, and the grace to prove our love towards Him, by a reciprocation of His sacred love!

I speak in the holy name of Jesus, to the greater honor of God!

Behold the disciple who loved Jesus! I say John was worthy of this encomium. And why? We shall find our answer in considering the characteristic marks by which true love manifests itself.

Love is an emotion of the heart, which, like all other sensations, can not be described. If a person has not experienced this feeling, no one will be able to explain it to him; and if he has experienced it, he will need no further explanation.

Every child has affection for its mother, and the feelings which an affectionate child entertains, it will manifest by its exterior demeanor, although it can not, as yet, give utterance to it.

Do you love Jesus? Ask of your heart when you mention His holy name. We are told that St. Augustine was wont to say: "I relish nothing in this world that does not come in connection with the holy name of Jesus." And St. Bernard, after pronouncing

this holy name, felt as if honey had touched his lips. If this be true of the saints, in consideration of what Christ had done for them, and in remembrance of the tokens of love which they had received from Him, what must have been the emotions of St. John, the disciple of love, when remembering Jesus with whom he had associated, on whose bosom he reclined at the institution of the sacrament of love! He was so intimate with Jesus, and received such numerous proofs of Christ's love for him.

Child of the Church, what does your heart feel when you pronounce the sweet name of Jesus—when you think of Him? By this, judge of the sincerity of your love towards Him.

The second mark of sincere love, is the care with which we strive not to *offend* the one beloved. How far removed from every stain of sin was St. John!

There is no communion between Belial and Christ, between sin and Christ.

Of course, even holy souls are not certain of never committing an imperfection. But we might piously believe that, after St. John was called by Christ, no stain of sin defiled his soul.

O man! redeemed by Christ, does your conscience testify that you never defile it by any venial sin?

Which is the third characteristic of true love?

It is the desire to do what we know will be agreeable to the loved one, and what will be a source of pleasure to him. Hence the great desire of St. Te-

resa to accomplish all things in the most perfect manner possible, thereby to render herself more pleasing to Jesus. "But this," says St. Paul, "this is the holy will of God—your sanctification;" and to attain it we must follow the example of Christ, and imitate Him, in accordance with the assurance of St. Paul: "For whom He foreknew, He also predestinated to be made conformable to the image of His Son. . . ."

"Learn of me." This exhortation of the Sacred Heart is addressed to all, who, as children of the Church, know Jesus, and call upon His holy name, and profess their belief in Him. "Be my followers, as I have been a follower of Christ," thus St. Paul might well affirm; and with equal justice might St. John have thus expressed himself,—he who beheld Jesus with his own eyes, and who had His divine example constantly before him, and for a still longer period beheld the reflection of the same in the virtuous life of the Blessed Virgin.

How like His divine Master must St. John have become, and how gloriously he testified his love for Christ during his whole life!

Redeemed mortal, what does your conscience say to this? Is this your desire, to sanctify your life for the love of Jesus? Is this the earnest wish of your heart? Question your life. If so, then indeed your love for Christ is sincere.

How is true love proven? I reply: By the care we take not only to please the one loved, to agree to all his wishes, to assist him, to protect his goods and

property, and aid not only him, but also those who are related to him by ties of love, friendship, or kindred.

I make the application and say: If our love for Jesus is genuine, it must manifest itself by the care we take to extend His kingdom on earth, and by the interest we take in the spiritual and temporal welfare of those, for whom Christ came into this world, and for whom He offered His life.

It is the fire of holy zeal which must burn within us, an eagerness to spread the faith all over the world, to practise the corporal and spiritual works of mercy in behalf of our neighbor.

John was an Apostle, and how zealously and faithfully he fulfilled the duties of his vocation!

We are told that, when well nigh one hundred years of age he continued to address the people, and continually exhorted them to mutual love.

But the fervor and fidelity of our love proves itself best by our willingness to make any *sacrifice*, even that of life itself, for the one loved. It was in this manner that St. John proved his love for Christ; for, during the reign of the tyrant Domitian, he was cast into a caldron of seething oil, and he would have thus sacrificed his life, if he had not been preserved by a miracle.

Although we have not the opportunity of testifying our love for Christ by a bloody martyrdom, still we have sufficient occasion to manifest this love for our Redeemer by patience and resignation to the will of God.

The caldron filled with seething oil, admonishes us not to let pass those precious opportunities that are offered us, of suffering with St. John an unbloody martyrdom, and thus showing our love for Jesus. This caldron of seething oil can be for you poverty, calumny, and the injuries which are heaped upon you, the diseases which you may have to bear. By persevering and conquering, your love for Jesus will be manifest.

But the surest pledge of our love for Christ, will be the supreme veneration we pay to Him in the Blessed Sacrament; here He is really present as God and man.

Who will have felt this more than St. John? What recollections fraught with heavenly consolation must have filled his soul during his whole life, and with what ardor was he inflamed when he offered the Holy Sacrifice of Mass, or when he bowed down before the Blessed Sacrament!

Devotion to our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament is the best means of ascertaining the degree of our love for Jesus. Let us herein follow the example of St. John,—of the disciple who loved Jesus! Amen!

THIRD SERMON.

“My little children, let us not love in word, nor in tongue, but in deed, and in truth.”—I John iii, 18.

ST. JOHN, the disciple whom Jesus loved; St. John, the disciple who loved Jesus. In both relations St. John is to us an object of admiration, and, at the same time, our model for imitation. But there is a third trait in his character which shines with peculiar brilliancy: St. John is also the Apostle of brotherly love.

Read his letters, and compare them with those of the other Apostles, and you will be convinced that St. John merited the honorable name: Disciple of love. These epistles are an outpouring of love towards his neighbor, consequent upon his great love of God. They are replete with a longing to call forth and strengthen a similar love in the hearts of all the faithful.

If we inquire still further into the motives which, in the heart of St. John, produced, strengthened and animated this wonderful love, we will perceive that the cause is this:

St. John regarded his neighbor in the light of faith. Let us do likewise, and we will feel encouraged to love our neighbor as ourselves, and our lives will prove that we are well disposed towards all.

O Mary, thou Eve of the New Testament, obtain

for us that love of our neighbor which inflamed the heart of St. John, that we may mutually edify and sanctify each other !

I speak in the holy name of Jesus, to the greater honor of God !

“Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.” This is the second commandment, and it is like to the first: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with thy whole heart, with thy whole strength, and with thy whole soul.” Verily, these are forcible words, and how few really understand and reflect upon their full signification; and still smaller is the number of those who are governed by these two precepts as was St. John the Evangelist.

This Apostle, who entertained such love for Jesus, fulfilled this great commandment of love of God and of his neighbor in a most perfect manner; because, in the person of Christ, he loved both God and man with unbounded love, and because, as I have said, he regarded every man in the light of faith.

Why do we not practise this love of our neighbor in as perfect a manner? I reply: We are deficient in that liveliness of faith and that love for Jesus which animated St. John.

How indifferently a person will treat his neighbor as long as he regards him in a mere natural light! What do we hear more frequently than the remark: What have I to do with that person? We speak thus, because man, simply as a fellow-being, seems to have

no particular claim to our sympathy. He is a *human* being, but still—what is he to me? Oh! a great deal. Regard your neighbor with the eyes of faith, and then how venerable, how attractive, and how worthy of your sympathy will he appear to you! Then you will feel, how St. Chrysostom had reason to exclaim in astonishment: “How, you say; What is that man to me? Why, he is a *man*, is not this sufficient to rouse your interest in him?”

I will give a practical illustration: You come to a railroad depot. Behold! a poor family just arrived, with a sick infant but a few months old; it is placed on the hard wooden floor! Poor mortal, how wretched, how miserable you are! you will say, if you regard it simply with the eyes of your body.

But open the eyes of your spirit to the light of faith, and you will say: O child, in this body covered with disease lives a soul created after the image of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost! God has thought of you from all eternity, and has given you a being immeasurably more glorious than all the shining worlds of the firmament; yes, more glorious than all that may be beyond this world of stars, with the exception of the angel worlds!

You are a human being. The Son of God has adopted your nature, and has exalted it above all the choirs of angels, and you are soon to share His glory for all eternity.

If already baptized, you are in a state of sanctifying grace, which transforms you into a child of God,

and makes it possible for you to gain merits for life eternal. A throne is awaiting you in the heavenly kingdom; and how many gems of merit you can secure for your celestial crown, if on earth you accomplish the holy will of God, and for love of Him faithfully discharge the duties of your vocation! When once you are admitted to the communion of saints, you may address all the angels as your associates; all the saints as your brothers and sisters; Mary as your mother; and Jesus, the Son of God, as your brother. Christian, do you perceive what powerful motives urge us to assist every person with active works of charity?

What, in the next place, incites us to assist others to practise works of mercy, is the *merit* of such works in the sight of God. "Blessed are the merciful; for they shall obtain mercy," Christ says; and, again: "What ye do to the least of mine, ye have done to me."

And if this holds good in regard to the corporal works of mercy, how much more so in respect to the spiritual, which benefit the soul, and of which St. Chrysostom justly remarks: "A single work of this kind is worth more in the sight of God than all the corporal works taken together, even if we should provide for all the sick and needy of the whole world."

Thus thought St. John; and if with him, we regard all that we can do for the welfare of our neighbor, in the light of faith, we will strive to make use of every

opportunity that presents itself, to perform works of mercy, and we will, moreover, seek opportunities of doing good.

But what enhances the merit of these works of charity, is the assurance of Christ, with which you are all familiar: "Whatever ye do to the least of mine, you have done to me."

Man, alas! looks upon his neighbor merely with the eyes of his body; he regards only his social position; and therefore we find so great want of zeal for the performance of charitable deeds. And, furthermore, we are but too apt to forget that, by assisting others, we are doing more for ourselves than for our neighbor.

A fervent soul, like St. John's, that truly loves Jesus, is desirous of becoming more conformable to Him, and is anxious to increase its measure of grace, and to become more holy and more *pleasing* to Him. But it is exactly these services which we render our neighbor for the love of Jesus, who has shed His precious blood for each and every one of us, which will induce Him, the more readily and liberally to impart those graces with which He favored the saints. What an inducement for a soul, imbued with a sincere love of Jesus, to zealously perform active works of mercy!

The Blessed Virgin, too, will willingly ask graces for us from Christ if we assist her children. In like manner, also, will those parents, relatives and friends who are already in heaven, make intercession for us, in order that we may receive the graces necessary for

the sanctification of our lives, if we endeavor to assist those who are near and dear to them.

To this we may add the intercession of those very persons whom we have saved, and who may already have entered upon eternity.

This love of our neighbor is a pledge of our *own salvation*, in consequence of the assurance of the Holy Ghost, through St. James.

Let us often reflect upon these motives with the liveliness of faith which animated St. John, and endeavor to imitate him in his love for God and for his neighbor !—Amen !

FEAST OF THE HOLY INNOCENTS.

FIRST SERMON.

“But Herod sending, killed all the male children, from two years old and under.”—Matt. 2.

WHENEVER we celebrate the feast of the Holy Innocents, our hearts are filled with compassion, but, at the same time, also with joy and consolation.

We have compassion for these innocent children, who shed their blood to satisfy the cruelty, vanity, and pride of a tyrant ;—but taking into consideration that they had not the remotest idea of the death they were to suffer, that, without any struggle, or troubles of conscience, they were torn from the arms of their mothers, to hasten to the arms of God, where a particular degree of glory awaited them,—in consideration of this, we feel comforted and happy, and can not but congratulate these little innocents, the first of the martyrs for Christ’s sake.

The remembrance of the Holy Innocents, has a most practical influence on the lives of parents especially, admonishing them to strive earnestly, that, even if their children have not the happiness of sealing the truth of their faith with the effusion of their blood,

they may, nevertheless, give testimony of it by the innocence of their lives.

Parents, I will point out to you, to-day, what you, on your part, are obliged to do, in order that your children may preserve their innocence.

O Mary, thou model for all dutiful mothers, obtain for those parents here present the grace, to know and fulfill their duties in this respect !

I speak in the holy name of Jesus, to the greater honor of God !

What renders the sight of newly-baptized children attractive, is their innocence.

Happy child ! every Christian will exclaim, when he beholds an infant just baptized. You are now entirely pure, free from every stain of sin, and an object of God's divine pleasure. It is especially the mother of the child who will feel this ; and if she is a pious mother, she will express the wish: Oh, if you would but always remain so !

But, alas ! how seldom is this wish realized ! Alas ! many, yes, I may say, most children lose their innocence at a very early age, and become victims of sin. To them the words of St. Augustine may be applied : " So small a boy—so small a girl,—and already so great a sinner ! "

Though it may happen that, notwithstanding the most careful training, some children go astray, still this does not relieve parents from the obligation

of taking such care and precautions as aid their children to pass their youth in innocence.

I will point out to you particularly in what this care consists.

In the first place, a mother, as soon as she is aware that a child is given her, should often raise her heart devoutly to God during the day, and pray for the welfare of her child. We read in the lives of the saints, that, at times, God, in a most wonderful manner, would make known to mothers the particular degree of sanctity to which their children were chosen. Think of St. Anna, the mother of Samuel; of St. Elizabeth, the mother of St. John the Baptist; of the mother of St. Dominic; the mother of St. Stanislaus!

When the child is *born*, and grows up, the mother's care should be directed to accustoming it to raise its heart to God, as soon as it is able; and this can be done at a much earlier age than many a mother imagines.

Parents should faithfully discharge their religious duties; say their morning and night prayers with their children, who will thus, at an early age, acquire a love for prayer.

If children are not induced in their early youth, by the good example and exhortations of parents, to say their prayers; if they are not instructed to begin and end the day with devotional exercises, they will most assuredly be exposed to the danger of neglecting prayer altogether, and to commit numerous sins in consequence.

As soon as the child advances in years, it should be thoroughly *instructed* in matters of faith, and its heart must be disposed to think, above all things, of the one important affair of salvation. It should be reminded that all the things of this world are but vanity in themselves, if they are not employed as means to serve God.

Parents, teach your children to say, when allured by the world, to say with St. Aloysius: What will this avail me for eternity?

There is no doubt that the inordinate desire to have, to possess, and to enjoy the goods and pleasures of this world, is the cause of the carelessness of youth in matters of their salvation; to this it is owing that they so freely indulge their sensual desires,—sin,—and go to ruin.

Parents are entirely too anxious to increase their temporal possessions. No wonder, then, that they do not instill into the hearts of their children a disdain for the world, and do not sufficiently cultivate and nourish in them a desire for heavenly things. The spirit of the world takes possession of their children's hearts, and but too often draws them into the abyss of sin.

And as parents should be thus intent upon directing the children's attention to approaching eternity, in like manner should they strive to impress them with a horror for sin.

Would to God that all mothers would imitate the example of St. Blanche, who was wont thus to ad-

dress her son Louis : "Dear child, I would a thousand times rather behold you dead at my feet, than in a state of mortal sin !"

But to guard their children from mortal sin, mothers should teach them to walk in the presence of God, to honor the Blessed Virgin and their guardian angels ; and, moreover, take precautions that other children do not lead theirs into temptation and cause them to lose their innocence. Therefore, even as regards sisters and brothers, parents should use the utmost care that they may not prove an occasion of sin to each other.

And still more destructive is the bad example of parents. If parents desire that their children retain purity of heart, then their *own life* must be a *mirror* and a model, so that even after their death the remembrance of the virtuous example of the father and the mother, will cause their children to tremble at the very thought of committing a sin.

Therefore, parents should make it a point to be faithful in reciting their morning and night prayers, to attend divine service regularly, to frequently receive Holy Communion, thereby setting a good example, which the children will feel encouraged to imitate.

As long as children love to pray, to attend divine service, and to receive Holy Communion frequently, parents may hope for the best. But woe to those parents who begin and end the day without prayer, who do not fulfill their religious duties, and neglect to receive the Holy Sacraments ! Children of such

parents are in great danger of losing their innocence; they are scandalized by the conduct of their own parents. It is especially on Sundays and holy days that they should give their children this example of piety.

When children, following the example of their parents, neglect the service of the Lord, and take delight in worldly enjoyments, all hope for the preservation of innocence may be abandoned.

A most dangerous rock, arising but too often in the turbulent stream of life, is the perusing of worldly books and trashy novels, and the society of worldly-minded people.

If parents really wish that their children may serve God with a pure conscience, they must take care that their children never remain alone with persons of the opposite sex, nor frequent nightly amusements, and thus voluntarily remain in the proximate occasion of sin. If this precaution is not taken, children will lose their innocence, and the responsibility will rest heavily on the conscience of the parents.

Parents, you who are listening to me, examine yourselves carefully in regard to each of these points, and make a firm resolution to act in the future as I have advised you. If you do so your children will not only be a source of joy to you in this life, but they will also be eternally grateful to you in heaven!—Amen!

SECOND SERMON.

“But Herod was exceedingly angry, and killed all male-children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the borders thereof.”—Matt. 2.

WHEREVER the Gospel is preached to-day, the world is astounded, and abominates the cruelty of Herod, and deplores the crime of infanticide, of which he was guilty.

Taking this in a moral sense, we find that there are child-murderers not only in Bethlehem and its vicinity, but they can be found in all places. And the worst of it is that children themselves are but too frequently the cause of their own ruin, and become martyrs of Satan, whose image we see reflected in Herod.

The death of the Holy Innocents was unmerited, but is salutary for them. On the other hand, how many children cause the death of their soul by committing sins, and, in many cases, are themselves responsible for their perdition.

Christ said at one time: “Suffer little children to come unto me; for of such is the kingdom of God.” How few there are who keep unsullied the innocence of early childhood!

Let us, therefore, consider to-day which are the sins most frequently committed by the youth of our day, and which are hurrying them into the abyss of ruin.

These reflections may, at the same time, serve as a warning to parents and educators, who may learn, to

do what they must be especially attentive to, that the rising generation may not suffer shipwreck in regard to salvation.

O Mary, mother of all children whom thou desirest to save, show thyself a mother especially to the children of this congregation!

I speak in the holy name of Jesus, to the greater honor of God!

It is a well-established principle, founded on experience, that he who secures the youth, will secure the future for the accomplishment of his designs.

The enemies of our Church and religion, on their part, feel this but too well, and therefore their endeavors to attract the youth to themselves, and to infuse into their hearts the poison of their pernicious views and principles; causing them to become unmindful of God and His Holy Church, of heaven and approaching eternity; to live only for this world, to strive to accumulate as much wealth as possible, and to enjoy life to its utmost.

Alas! when we examine the conduct of the youth of the present day, we can not but notice that the world is becoming more and more indifferent in matters of religion, and, therefore, our enemies have but too much reason to hope for the success of their projects.

Let us consider some classes of children.

In the first place we have *indeavour* children. They

do not say their morning and evening prayers, nor grace before and after meals; they do not hear Mass devoutly, nor prepare themselves well for the reception of the Holy Sacraments. In short, they are neither too willing nor faithful in the performance of the various devotional exercises of the Church.

Such children, in most cases, grow up without ever praying. They tell you, father and mother do not say their morning and night prayers; how then can you expect us to do so? They are often ignorant of the most ordinary prayers; they absent themselves from divine service on Sundays and holy days; and either run in the streets or frequent ale-houses, instead of going to Church. And how do they conduct themselves when they do enter a Church? They stand as if they were in some public place, do not fold their hands in prayer, do not kneel at the elevation or benediction; they converse with others, and sometimes leave the church in the midst of service.

These children do not attend Vespers nor evening devotions, but profane the Sunday by visits to saloons, or by boisterous entertainments, which they prolong far into the night. And if you inquire: What do parents say to all this? you will often receive the answer, Nothing!

Such negligent parents do not care to watch over the conduct of their children; they say that their children are already grown up, and that nothing can be done in the matter. Something could be done, if parents had maintained their authority, and caused

their children to respect the same from their early youth,—if the tree had been bent whilst it was young.

Again, we have the class of the *uninstructed*, which comprises the large majority of children. St. Paul says: "The just man liveth by faith." It is incredible what little religious instruction our youth receive; they are not at all competent to justify themselves when scoffers of religion attack any article of their faith. Take, for example, the dogma of the Infallibility of the Pope. I ask: Is there any young person in this congregation, who is able to give the real meaning of this dogma, and to prove its truth by Holy Scripture and tradition as far as necessary, and who is able to refute the most ordinary objections of Infidels and Protestants? And yet, every Christian should be able to do this; and not only as regards this dogma, but for the doctrines of the Church. If he had but once thoroughly studied a hand-book of Catholic doctrine, he would be qualified to defend his faith.

But parents are content if their children receive sufficient instruction to enable them to make their first Communion, and nothing more. And what is the consequence? Children leave home, come in contact with all sorts of people, listen to their raileries against the doctrines of the Catholic Church, begin to waver, and finally their faith suffers shipwreck.

The following class is that of the *disobedient*:

What a great lack of obedience do we find everywhere! In this is sown the seed of many sins. Parents warn, but the child hears not; they punish, and

still the child does not obey ; he is away from home all day, and his father and mother are ignorant of his whereabouts. As he advances in years, his obstinacy and disobedience gather strength. Children should remember that their parents are the representatives of God, and that disobedience to their parents may lead to a general neglect of their duties to God.

We have finally a class of children, who are already *habitual sinners*. My God ! how numerous are the vices to which children are addicted even in their early youth ! What a multitude of children from twelve to fourteen years of age, are already aged in sin ! How many of these in later life lose their faith, and become obstinate in sin, so that all the entreaties and exhortations of parents then prove fruitless !

Would that all parents and educators reflected seriously upon what I have said to-day ! Let them bend the tree while it is young ; that it may not grow up to be a tree of evil, which may endanger even their own salvation ! Amen !

THIRD SERMON.

"He arose, and took the child and His mother, and retired into Egypt."—
Matt. 2.

ST. JOSEPH, being admonished in sleep by an angel, took the child and His mother, and retired with them into Egypt. He provided for the temporal welfare of the Infant Jesus, and the divine Infant took charge of the spiritual welfare of St. Joseph. St. Joseph had but to regard the Divine Child, in order to learn how to serve God perfectly.

The most important duty of parents is, not so much to labor for the bodily and temporal welfare of the children whom God has given them—nature will prompt them to do this; for are they not of their flesh and blood?—but their chief care must be to bring up their children for heaven.

It is their duty to try to bring up their children practical Catholics.

Pious parents generally cherish the hope of living to see their children walk in the way of God, but how many and how bitter are their disappointments!

It may happen at times, that notwithstanding the best training, children will deviate from the path of virtue, and go to ruin; but when children degenerate it is very often owing to defective instruction.

Therefore, I will to-day, at the crib of Jesus, direct the attention of parents to the leading principles that should guide them in the education of their children.

O Mary, thou who art so anxious for the salvation of all men, obtain for all the parents of this congregation such knowledge, that the education of their children may bear fruits for life eternal!

I speak in the holy name of Jesus, to the greater honor of God.

Parents, I said I would point out to you to-day, at the crib of Christ, what true education demands.

He who desires to bring up children for God, must, in the first place, be himself a man full of the fear of the Lord. Thus only will he be enabled to teach the child the doctrines of faith in an effective manner.

He must be full of the knowledge of God, and constantly bear in mind, and perfectly understand, what an important affair man's *salvation* is, taking to heart the warning of Christ: "What will it profit a man to gain the whole world, if he suffers loss of his own soul?"

The instructor must be thoroughly imbued with this consciousness of faith, which must manifest itself in all his actions, so that the child will at once perceive that his father and mother are anxious to be pious, faithful Christians, and that they are solicitous about their own eternal welfare.

But with so many parents this is unfortunately not the case; they profess the Catholic faith with their lips, but are themselves full of worldly-mindedness. The result is, that the child grows up, and is a great

deal more anxious about worldly matters than about heaven and approaching eternity.

It is necessary that faith and the promises of salvation be implanted as early as possible in the hearts of children, and be constantly nourished and reanimated; this is the first principle of success in the education of children.

It is a matter of course, that where faith is held in such high esteem, great care will also be taken that the children avail themselves of the sources of grace which God has imparted to His Church, in order to lead a fervent life in accordance with the principles of faith. These means of grace are: prayer, spiritual reading, instruction in the truths of religion, the use of the Holy Sacraments.

A knowledge of human nature is also an important means of bringing an education to a prosperous issue. Great care must be taken to discover in the heart of the child those perverse tendencies which might prevent the seed of faith from bearing good fruit.

These inordinate tendencies are, as a rule, those which oppose the virtues which Christ, at His birth, as man, taught and recommended to the children of men.

The Infant Jesus *humbled* himself, lying in the lowly manger. The basis of evil in the human heart is pride—the beginning of all sin, as Holy Scripture affirms. The germ of pride is hidden within the heart of the child, and manifests itself at first by obstinacy

and disobedience. Parents must, therefore, above all things, be determined not to allow the child to indulge in or yield to obstinacy.

It must be conquered by punishment, and by making use of the rod whilst the child is quite young, that he may learn to obey, and to do exactly what is required of him. But for this very reason, parents should demand only that which is just, so as not to give the child occasion to think that the parents are requiring something unjust or impossible, and that they will finally be compelled to yield to his wishes.

The sister virtue of humility is *obedience*. The Infant Jesus rests within the crib, just as the Blessed Virgin has placed Him therein ; and during thirty years of His sojourn at Nazareth, He was submissive to His blessed mother, and to his foster-father St. Joseph. What a powerful inducement for parents to insist upon humble submission on the part of their children, so that their training may be a truly Christian one.

It is owing to their deficiency in this respect, that parents lose control over their children.

Furthermore, the Infant Jesus is wrapped in poor swaddling clothes. Pride and vanity delight in gorgeous dress. Parents must take care that the demon of vanity and love of dress, do not find secret access to the heart of the child. They should endeavor, however, to accustom their children to *modesty* and cleanliness of dress.

Another evil propensity, whose germ is concealed in

the child's heart, is the desire to have, to retain, and to enjoy.

Little children want every thing they see; they extend their tiny hand to grasp the object, and bring it to their mouth to taste and enjoy it. In course of time, this desire degenerates into covetousness; into love of money, and the goods of this world; into avarice, and a craving for all sensual enjoyment possible.

Parents should therefore begin early to teach their children to be satisfied with what is given them; not to envy other children; to share willingly with others, especially with their own sisters and brothers. They should also see that their children do not eat to excess, nor indulge too freely in sweetmeats, and that they be satisfied with the ordinary household fare.

The Divine Child lies in the manger, a lonely Infant. The care taken for the proper education of children often bears little fruit, because of bad *companions*. Hence, parents should extend their care and attention beyond the mere hours when their children are united with them in the family circle. They must teach their children to govern that longing for certain amusements, which bring them into the company of corrupt associates.

We behold the Infant Jesus as man, in the person of the Son of God, lying in the crib, in a state of uninterrupted *prayer*.

To make the child's education productive of good fruit, he must be taught to gather strength for the accomplishment of his duties, from the sources of grace,

of which the chief one is prayer. How zealously, therefore, should parents labor to instill a love for prayer into the hearts of their little ones, so that they may love to say their prayers without being forced; to hear Mass regularly, and to receive Holy Communion frequently.

In our days parents must be careful to keep within due bounds a passion for reading, which their children may manifest. Is it not singular, that even very young children find such great pleasure in reading?

And as the reading of good books can do an amount of good, so also the reading of bad, worldly books, can cause a great deal of harm. How very anxious, therefore, should parents be to furnish their children with good reading matter.

Christ lies in the manger as the Redeemer of the world, to *reconcile* men with God, and with one another. Impatience, anger, and hatred sever the bond of love. Children usually sin by anger, quarrelling, and striking each other.

In this respect parents must instruct their children more by their example than by words; by practising patience and *meekness*; by avoiding violence and a certain unchristian harshness, even when punishing their children.

Parents, educate your children in this manner, and pray for them always, and they will not only be a joy to you, but you will lay up most precious merits for yourselves in the eternal kingdom! Amen!

FEAST OF NEW YEAR'S EVE.

FIRST SERMON.

"Son, observe the time."—Eccl. 4.

A FEW hours more, and the year 18— will have passed into eternity.

The main thought which should occupy us at the close of the parting year is the answer to the question: Has this year proved to be a meritorious one for me, in a Christian point of view? and what benefits for the coming year can I derive from the experiences of this year?

I will reply to these questions in a general way this evening, and each one will be able to answer any point which may touch him personally.

The leading thoughts to which I link my remarks are the few hours that yet remain of the parting year. The stroke of midnight will soon proclaim its departure, and the year 18— will be numbered with the things of the past.

I compare these few hours to the characteristic periods which form the general outline of our lives. They are: The hour of work, the hour of suffering, the hour of joy, the hour of prayer, the hour of temptation.

The manner in which our hearts have been disposed, the conduct we have manifested in these periods, will decide whether the parting year has been for us one of gain or loss for approaching eternity.

I beg of you to meditate seriously on what I am going to say.

O Mary, mother, bless thy children, and the words addressed to them to-night!

I speak in the holy name of Jesus, to the greater honor of God!

The hour of *work*.—Adam sinned, and the judgment of condemnation was pronounced against him and all mankind: "In the sweat of thy brow, thou shalt eat thy bread." Rich or poor, king or beggar, high or low, every child of man must succumb to this divine decree.

Woe to him who fancies that, because ample provision is made for his maintenance, he can pass his life in indolence! He is in the greatest danger of perishing; for an old proverb says: "Idleness is the source of all vice," and it is confirmed by experience.

So, then, we must work! Those, especially, are aware of this fact who are obliged to labor incessantly to provide for themselves and their family.

You have worked hard during this year. Have you labored hard to fulfill the duties of your state? Have you worked for love of God, to accomplish His holy

will, not so much in consideration of a temporal remuneration as for the greater honor of God?

Have you in your work united your intention with that of the Sacred Heart? Rejoice, if you have done so; the parting year will gather these works, as good wheat, into the storehouse of heaven; and you have become richer for eternity. Return thanks to God to-day, and make the resolution to renew this good intention daily and hourly, and with still greater ardor during the course of the coming year.

If, on the other hand, you have been more busily engaged this year than ever before, if you have received a better salary than in former years, if you have gathered gold and diamonds,—and still have neglected your religious duties, and thought but of the world and temporal gain;—then you have become poorer for eternity. If you have, perhaps, had the misfortune, by neglecting prayer and the Holy Sacraments, of committing a mortal sin,—then treasures have you lost for heaven during this year! Repent, form better resolutions for the coming year, and thank God that He still gives you life.

Secondly, I wish to direct your attention to the hour of *suffering*. This is, as it were, linked to the first. For us mortals, suffering as well as toil is a consequence of the sin of our first parents. Job exclaims: "Man born of a woman, living for a short time, is filled with many miseries."

Were you obliged to bear heavy burdens during the past year? were you afflicted with sufferings,

caused by sickness or the malevolence of men? Be not surprised. For us fallen mortals there is no other way to heaven, save the path which our Lord and Redeemer has trodden before us, namely: The way of the holy cross!

We have, therefore, no reason to be dejected; for we have the promise of Christ, given by the mouth of the Apostle: "If we have suffered with Him, we shall also be glorified with Him."

The question is not whether you have had a heavy cross to bear, but whether you have borne it in the right spirit for the love of Christ. All depends on this. We must not look upon sufferings in the light in which the heathens regarded them, but in the light of faith; we must not consider them a misfortune, but accept them as a means of proving the greatness of our love and fidelity to God.

Secondly, whatever suffering Almighty God sends us, we must accept as coming from Him, and not from the hand of man, and we must bear our cross in union with the intention and sufferings of our Saviour.

If you have done so in the past year, I heartily congratulate you; for the departing year carries brilliant gems into eternity, to adorn your heavenly crown. Rejoice, and be grateful to God.

But if you have regarded the tribulations with which you have been visited, with feelings of aversion; if you have not once thought of God who permitted these things, but only looked to the persons who may have caused you the trouble; if you have harbored

feelings of hatred, and, perchance, even murmured against God, oh repent! for you have borne the cross with the thief on the left hand of Christ, without having gained the least merit for life eternal; yes, you have perhaps by desire for revenge or by blasphemy run the risk of eternal damnation! But now form better resolutions for the coming year, and, resigning yourself to the holy will of God, welcome the trials and sufferings that may be your portion for the coming year.

The third hour to which I refer is that of *joy*. Even in this vale of tears, man has hours of joy which he can make meritorious for the kingdom of eternal joy. But this requires several conditions.

What have been your joys during the past year? Have they been lawful or unlawful? The Apostle himself tells us to rejoice, but he says that we must rejoice in the Lord. Go through the year and see how much of your pleasure was such as the Apostle would have it. How many of your evenings after a day of work did you spend in pleasure that was without sin? How many of your evening pleasure parties can you look back to as wholly free from sin,—from grievous sin?

Great dangers arise from an inordinate love of enjoyment.

Alas! thou parting year! Who knows how many a young girl has during thy course lost her innocence at doubtful entertainments! How many a young man, by committing mortal sin, has this year entered upon

the broad path which leads to perdition, and which, perhaps, he will never again forsake! For such it has indeed been an unfortunate year.

How many have yielded to intemperance, and became drunkards in the course of this year! Still, thank God that you have not been carried off in your sin. Make up your minds for the coming year; and if you rejoice, let it be with a joy that will not bring a stain upon your soul!

Sanctify the enjoyments of the family circle. But, above all, try to render yourselves worthy of the delight to be experienced by union with God in prayer, and by the regular practice of your religious duties. Has God particularly favored you during the past year with heavenly consolations—such as He granted to the saints? Oh, how fortunate you have been! But if the favors you received were not as great as those conferred upon the saints, still you will have tasted the spiritual joy and consolation which Christ promises to every child of the Church who lives according to her spirit!

The fourth hour to which I call your attention is that of *prayer*. In order that we may work meritoriously for heaven, to suffer and to enjoy, it is necessary that we co operate with the grace of God within us, and thus make ourselves worthy of greater graces. One principal means of doing this is prayer. Have you been more fervent this year in saying your prayers? Have you said your morning and night prayers faithfully? Have you received the Holy Sac-

raments worthily and frequently? If so, this has been a happy year for you.

But if, unfortunately, your conscience upbraids you, because you have been less fervent in your prayers, or have not approached the Holy Sacraments as well as formerly, now is the time for you to resolve to do better in future.

Finally there is a time of *temptation*. "Satan goes about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour," says St. Peter.

Have you been harassed by numerous temptations? have you perhaps sought the occasion, and sinned? For the love of Christ, avoid all occasions of sin, cost what it may; remembering the warning of Christ: "If thy eye scandalize thee, pluck it out; if thy foot scandalize thee, cut it off." When you are assailed by temptations resist at once; pray for assistance, and you will conquer.

Finally, let me call your attention to the hour which will toll for each and every one of us—the hour of death!

If you wish the hour of your death to be a consoling one, you must prepare for it, by making good use of your life. The year 18— may close the life of some one here present. Begin, then, at once to live as in the solemn hour of death you will wish to have lived.

I am indeed greatly pleased to see that you are closing this year in the real Catholic spirit of the Church. On the other hand I pity those, who, although they call themselves Catholics, instead of as-

sembling here to-night to thank God for the benefits received during the previous year, and to join in the Te Deum, are passing the last hours in reveling and in sensual enjoyments. How they will repent of having carried the burden of the unbelieving, heretical, and faithless children of the world, when the cold sweat of death covers their brow and trickles down their pallid face.

Thank God, that Satan has not allured you away to-night!

Make good use of the eight thousand seven hundred and sixty hours of the coming year, so that the New Year's eve which follows your death, may find you in heaven. This is my sincere wish to you all at the close of the year 18—! Amen!

SECOND SERMON.

“Redeem the time.”—Coloss. 4.

ANOTHER year is passing into eternity, and inas-
much as the hearts, that see it pass, have shared
in its happiness or its woe, its sorrows or its joys, its
gains or its losses, insomuch their emotions are varied
and opposed.

There is one thing in particular which doubtless fills
the heart of the worldling with pleasure at the close of
the year. This source of gratification is the possibility
of saying to himself with truth: I have been poor, now
I am rich; I have cleared all my debts, and these were
not insignificant; I have, moreover, entered upon a very
lucrative business, in which failure is out of the ques-
tion, provided I be watchful; and, my wealth increasing
daily, a happy future, free from cares and anxiety, must
be mine.

But who can tell what the New Year brings for him?
Unforeseen events—wars, storms, fire—very frequently
crush all such blissful expectations. Sickness may be-
fall him, or death himself lay his icy hand upon him.
With what significance, then, these words of Christ are
recalled to our minds to-day: “Lay up to yourselves
treasures in heaven; where neither the rust nor moth
doth consume, and where thieves do not break through
nor steal!” Have you gathered such treasures for your-
self during the past year? Will you do so in future?
It will entirely depend upon one condition, of which

the parting year so solemnly reminds us: To estimate time at its worth, and, in consequence, draw the greatest profit from its use. *To do this effectually, we must all redeem the lost time, employ well the fleeting hour, secure the future, and thus gain riches for eternity.*

O Mary, thou who didst offer to God the first pulsation of thy heart; who didst spend every moment of thy life in glorifying Him; who didst gather treasures far exceeding those of the angels and saints, obtain for us the grace that we, too, may employ our time in laboring for our salvation!

I speak in the holy name of Jesus, to the greater honor of God!

A dying father once said to his son: "If you wish to become rich, you must, in the first place, pay your debts, and, secondly, not contract new ones." The advice was certainly good.

Many a person, entering upon business, borrows money, and begins on such a grand scale that he is obliged to contract very heavy debts. Now, instead of determining to pay these debts, he imprudently enters into new speculations; fails, and, in the end, is poorer than he was when he began.

The same may be said with regard to the affair of our salvation. It is necessary first to pay our debts. What these debts are, is shown by the words of the Lord's prayer: "Forgive us our trespasses." They are our sins and imperfections.

What a solemn admonition, if we are earnestly striving to become rich for heaven! And why? Because mortal sin deprives us of all the merit we have gained for heaven by our good thoughts, words, desires and actions. For all the treasures which you might have gathered for heaven, by countless good thoughts, words and works,—by prayer, confession, communion and alms-deeds, during thirty or even seventy years of life,—all would be lost, if in the course of this year you have committed one mortal sin, and, as our Lord assures us by Ezechiel, all your merits would thenceforth be canceled.

And still more terrible is the thought, that all the good works performed in a state of mortal sin,—be they what they will—even the building of hospitals and churches throughout the world,—are not meritorious of eternal life.

Ascetic writers justly compare such works to the apples growing on the shore of the Dead Sea, which, to the eye, seem rosy and ripe, but to the tongue yield only dust and ashes.

To what expressions should we give utterance, and how bitterly bewail the fact, that so many commit mortal sins even in their youth, and continue for years to sin and confess, to confess and sin, to lose one grace after the other, and, as it were, from day to day to increase their guilt in the sight of God!

Sinner, here present, what does your conscience say to this? With what reason, perhaps, you will have to exclaim: What must I do to pay these debts? I an-

swer you: Go to confession, make known your guilt to the representative of Christ, repent, and redeem the lost time by works of penance.

This, however, is not meant for mortal sins only; the little concern with which we commit venial sins make us heedless of time, deprives us of its benefits, and endangers our salvation.

Venial sin certainly does not, like mortal sin, deprive us of the merit which we have acquired by the performance of good works; but it tarnishes the soul. These deliberate venial sins, besides, do not only hinder the flow of God's graces; but also lessen in us the desire of profiting by those we receive, and thus they will gradually lead us into that state of indifference of which Christ speaks in this threatening manner: "But because thou art lukewarm, . . . I will begin to vomit thee out of my mouth."

Therefore examine yourself also in this respect at the close of the year. Although you may not have offended God by mortal sin, still think how many venial sins you may have committed! of how many imperfections you stand accused! To you, also, the warning cry is directed: *Redeem* the lost time by confession and entire reconciliation with God. Begin a new life, examine your conscience with still greater care, and make good use of your time.

Your fidelity in this resolution may serve to indemnify you for the loss of the precious gems won by your good works, by giving you the jewels of a sincere repentance. The meaning of this is ex-

plained by a particular instance in the life of St. Gertrude.

Gertrude was once favored with a vision. A soul appeared to her, arrayed in a splendid garment. In numerous places this garment had been torn from top to bottom, but the rents were bordered with the most precious pearls. Gertrude inquired of the soul the meaning of these countless rents and their peculiar embroidery. The soul replied: Gertrude, the many rents you behold in this garment, are the mortal sins which I committed during my life, and with which I thus marred the beauty of my baptismal robe. The many pearls which you see, are the tears shed for them in sincere repentance.

O sinner, profit by this reply; redeem the lost time by works of penance! Yea, more; redeem it, as the saints have done, by showing the greatest solicitude in the *use* of the *present* time still your own.

And in what did the zeal of the saints for the advantageous employment of their time consist? The saints fully understood the great value of time in its relations to eternity; they knew that the proper use of time was the only means of acquiring new merit, and of increasing the merit already gained. Time is a gift which the saints, even in their blessedness, do, as it were, begrudge us. To gain one minute's time every saint would leave heaven; as St. Teresa, appearing in a vision, once said to one of her spiritual daughters: If you but knew the value of time! I would gladly leave heaven for the short time neces-

sary to say one Hail Mary, and would then be willing to remain in purgatory till the end of the world, thereby to increase my eternal glory.

Thoroughly understanding the value of time, you must count the minutes to save the hours; and not be so foolish as to spend time frivolously, to lose it, or to waste it in idleness. No eagle soars so swiftly, no storm sweeps along so rapidly, as time speeds on, never more to return.

It is therefore necessary to guard your tongue, and so to regulate your intercourse with others as to leave sufficient time for prayer and the practice of good works, constantly striving to follow the example of the saints.

The saints made use of their time, also, by hearkening to the inspirations of the Holy Ghost, in order to profit by them, and to gain merit especially by the faithful accomplishment of the duties of their state, in accordance with the rules of a well-regulated life. If you have the duties of every-day carefully marked out, and perform them faithfully, you will not suffer any loss of time. Endeavor to do this in the coming year.

But the saints turned time to account, especially by their earnestness in embracing every opportunity of practising virtue, and performing good works, and by their zeal in seeking such opportunities. This caused them to become so rich in merits. Follow their example in the coming year, and it will prove a year of the greatest merit.

By these means *secure the future* time, as the saints have done, *reflecting* upon death and eternity. What can *better* prove the value of time, or confirm your resolution of employing it well, than the thought of the last breath we shall draw when stretched on the bed of death? What will be your last wish? Certainly no other than this: Had I but employed my time as profitably as the saints have done!

Consider frequently what our feelings will be in eternity, when we look back upon the time that was given us on earth in which to gain merits; and what sufferings the reprobates of hell would willingly endure for half an eternity, if they could but redeem one minute's time to make an act of perfect contrition. But then it will be too late; now we still have time.

Therefore I exhort you again: Redeem the lost time, make good use of the present, and secure the future; and this New Year's Eve will be succeeded by the dawn of a new life for you—a life of virtue.—Amen!

THIRD SERMON.

“The former things have passed away.”—Apoc. 21.

THE last evening of the year! What an important, solemn evening in its relation to the affair of our salvation, which knows no evening, but endures through eternal years!

If this end of our creation, our eternal happiness, has been attained, all is well, all is saved; but if this is not reached, all is confusion, all is lost.

How solemnly the close of the year recalls this truth, forcibly telling us of the swift flight of the time in which we are to secure our salvation. Now or never; and this now is so brief, so uncertain, so fleeting!

How quickly a year glides by, and how few years we count in a life-time!

At the same time the departing year strongly reminds us of the disposition of our hearts necessary in order that we may work effectually with regard to our salvation; it points out to us those truths, those thoughts and convictions which aid us most powerfully in strengthening in us the desire to accomplish the holy will of God in all things; finally, it tells us to make use of all that God has created, or that may befall us, as a means to prove our love towards God.

The parting year loudly proclaims that all that which is earthly, shall pass away,—that only what is eternal, is of value.

O Mary, whom the Church calls the wisest of virgins, whose life was spent in laboring for a blissful eternity, obtain for us, as the fruit of this hour's devotion, thy great earnestness, that we may begin to work seriously for our salvation, and continue in this zeal until the close of our mortal career!

I speak in the holy name of Jesus, to the greater honor of God!

"All is well that ends well," an old proverb tells us, and facts prove the truth of the saying. The question is not, whether we have gained or lost this year, or, if there have been gains, whether these were large or small, but the whole inquiry is about the present state of our fortune. In other words, our temporal prosperity does not so much depend on the happy beginning of the year as on its successful close.

Perchance, you were in needy circumstances at the beginning of the year, and during it you have inherited an amount of property, so that to-night, at its close, you have an abundance of wealth. It has proved a successful year for you.

At the commencement of the year you were without employment; but you have obtained a position which will enable you to provide for yourself and your family for life. It has been a happy year for you.

You were in poor health when the year began, but you met with an able physician, and recovered entirely. You are in better health now than ever before.

This year has been a fortunate one in regard to your temporal welfare.

Viewed from the opposite side, this truth still remains: For what will it avail you, if you began the year in opulence, and if you are now in reduced circumstances, if various misfortunes have deprived you of your possessions? You held a lucrative position, but are at present without employment. You were in excellent health, and in the course of the year a chronic disease made its presence in you known. And, therefore, as far as your well being on earth is concerned, this year has not been a happy one.

This consideration, and the conclusion we have drawn, will be of immeasurably greater importance when we reflect upon the end and aim of man, his relation to God and to eternity; and when we think of the great and only necessary affair of our salvation. If, then, at the close of the year I were to put this question to you: What are your feelings with regard to this truth? Does it impress you more deeply to-night than at the beginning of the year? And does it exert a greater influence upon your life of virtue?

Man is in this world that he may know, love, and serve God, and thereby render himself happy forever.

The proof we have that this truth is not only not beyond the grasp of our understanding, but that it moreover pervades and influences our whole being, is made manifest according to a remark of St. Ignatius in his spiritual exercises, by a four-fold disposition of our will. For it is owing to the state of the will that

man has the power sincerely to acknowledge that riches or poverty, honor or contempt, health or sickness, a short life or a long one, are no longer a matter of desire, provided he can serve God, know His will, and accomplish it as perfectly as possible.

And what thought, what motive is it that determines and strengthens us in our resolutions to serve God, and to overcome every obstacle that opposes us herein? It is the constant meditation upon that great truth, of which the parting year so forcibly reminds us, namely: All that is earthly will pass away, and nothing is of real value except the treasures which we lay up for heaven, and which endure for all eternity.

No doubt our salvation absolutely requires that disposition of heart and will which enables man to will and desire nothing but the accomplishment of the holy will of God and His glorification, no matter whether it be in riches or poverty, in honor or contempt, in health or sickness, in long life or in short life.

Satan, the world, and the flesh act in direct opposition to this, and seek to destroy this equanimity by an inordinate longing to become rich and honored, and to live as long as possible in the enjoyment of earthly pleasure.

There are numerous reasons which may serve to convince man that the possession of earthly goods is insufficient to satisfy the human heart, formed and fashioned for God.

But there is one particular circumstance which

points out to us the folly and vanity of seeking contentment in the enjoyment of temporal goods; and this is the recollection which the present evening awakens within us, that all things earthly *pass* away, and pass, oh, how quickly!

Can you deny it?

How many have died during the course of this year! They were rich, exceedingly rich—ten times, a hundred times richer than you. They labored successfully for increase of wealth, and, perhaps, risked their health, and even their lives, in its acquirement; and now they are gone into eternity.

They have not taken a single farthing to the other world. What must their feelings have been in the hour of death? They surely thought: O mammon! you are not deserving of the care and the hard labor I had on your account. I shortened my life for you; but I must leave all. There is nothing that I can take with me, save the good works which I have performed for the love of God; these only will accompany me, and endure forever. Oh that I had been more anxious during my life to gather treasures for heaven by deeds of virtue!

Honored or despised, we should say, when there is question of serving our Lord, it is immaterial to me, if I but glorify God. Many reasons there are which go to prove how insignificant and defective all the honor is which may be conferred upon man, but nothing proves this more clearly or more forcibly than the parting year. *Past and gone!*

Kings may have been deprived of their thrones during the year, and others who were honored are now disgraced and ignored.

There will be a time when all earthly distinction and renown will vanish like smoke. Gone! Honor, no you are not worth my seeking; for what would it avail me to have reached the height of fame, if in eternity I would be compelled to suffer the ignominy of the reprobate?

Health or infirmity, a long or a short life, I am indifferent to all provided I be saved. Such should be our sentiments.

There are many motives to urge us thus to dispose our hearts, but perhaps the most powerful of them all is the one of which the dying year reminds us. The time will come for your final illness; and the time of death will come, and perhaps very soon, to put an end to all things earthly.

Hearken in spirit to the words of the angel of time, as they resound this evening among the tombs of the dead: *Gone—forever-gone!*

God grant that not only this last evening of the year but every evening may bring to our minds what I have just said, and no doubt our will to serve God will then be strengthened, and during the course of the coming year, and all successive years, we will live in such a manner as constantly to increase our merits for eternal life.—Amen!

FEAST OF NEW YEAR'S DAY.

FIRST SERMON.

“Behold, I make all things new.”—Apoc.

IN the Book of Time another leaf has been turned, and a new page lies open before us. Who is there that would not desire this year to become for him a happy and a blessed one, not only in temporal matters, but also in the weightier affairs of the soul? Indeed, so universal is this wish, and so deeply implanted in the human heart, that it has given rise to the beautiful custom of friends wishing one another peace and happiness during the year which is just dawning upon the world. The general mode of greeting at this festive season runs something like this:

“I wish you a happy new year,—health, prosperity, long life, and all that your heart desires.”

I am not, in general, my friends, opposed to these expressions of good will; but I regret that they manifestly relate only to the temporal welfare of our neighbor. We may, and even should, wish his temporal affairs to prosper, in so far as the possession of this world's goods can serve as a means of pleasing God; but how much more earnestly should true fraternal charity urge and dispose us to express our heartfelt wishes for the welfare of his soul, for his rapid prog-

ress in the great affair of salvation, and his advance in the way of Christian perfection?

To bring it more forcibly home to us, and to place before our eyes in the clearest manner the nature of what our New Year's wishes should be, we need only apply the same words of congratulation to the spiritual life, and hence I say: Upon this joyous festive day, which ushers in the dawning of another year, I wish to one and all spiritual health and welfare, a rich store of good, meritorious actions, length of days, and every thing that your hearts can wish for, or rather what I would desire for myself in the order of progress on the way of salvation.

O Mary, may my wish be accomplished, during the course of the present year, in every one assembled here!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, for the greater honor and glory of God!

“A happy New Year, and may you enjoy good *health* till its close.” There is every reason to express this wish, for health is a most precious boon; and is more necessary to the enjoyment of life, from a worldly point of view, than any other temporal blessing. What avail riches or honors if health be wanting to their possessor; for, though all the dignities and honors that man can acquire were placed at one's disposal, they could afford the recipient no pleasure if he were obliged to be weary and ill on a bed of

pain. In a still greater degree does the tradesman, upon whose daily toil depends his daily bread, feel the importance of health; for, were he to fall ill, he must see his wife and little ones want for food.

But if this be so in regard to our corporal health, so much the more forcibly does it apply to the welfare of our souls—to our spiritual health. And this depends on the state of sanctifying grace, and on the efficacy of actual grace, for he who is not in the state of sanctifying grace is spiritually dead; in the sight of God he is a corpse.

O Christians, how many walk the earth, even those who have received the gift of faith, and yet their souls are dead within them! This is especially so in large cities, which, in many instances, might well be called spiritual grave-yards. And among those assembled here to-day, are there not many whose souls are laden with the heavy weight of mortal sin, who suffer from hour to hour the gnawing pain of the worm which never dies—remorse—who, before God, are spiritually dead? To such, my New Year's wish may easily be divined.

Sinners, I wish you, from my inmost heart, a sincere return to God, perfect reconciliation with him in the sacrament of penance, and the grace of perseverance. To you I will not wish temporal prosperity, for it would bring no blessing, but rather afford new opportunities for you to go on in your sinful career, to offend your Creator so deeply until the curse of the damned would most certainly fall upon your miserable souls;

for, according to St. Augustine: "There is no surer sign of eternal reprobation than the temporal prosperity of the sinner."

But if you are in the state of **g**race, and striving to walk in the way of the Lord, then, beloved in Christ, I wish you perfect spiritual health. The maladies to which our souls are subjected are produced by the inward tumult of the various passions to which we yield, for sin creates the keenest sufferings. St. Ambrose knew this well when he exclaimed: "Man, thy fever is pride, covetousness, lust, anger, gluttony, envy, sloth; and although we may not be deprived of the life of the soul—sanctifying grace—having committed no mortal sin, nevertheless it will be very much weakened by the venial sins and imperfections which we commit." They injure the health of the soul, and a spiritual languor is the inevitable result.

Some among you, in the course of the departed year, may have given way to vanity and pride. It has colored almost all your words and deeds, and self-love has kept your interior in a constant state of tumult and agitation; therefore my New Year's wish for you is an entire recovery, namely, the acquisition of a very humble heart.

You have been, during the year now passed away, suffering from spiritual indisposition. Avarice—the greed of gold—has affected your souls, and money seems to be the object of all your love. I wish you, for the New Year, a speedy recovery from this dangerous malady—hearts entirely free from all disor-

derly desires after the possessions and treasures of this world.

You have, within the past year, suffered from some spiritual malady which, it may be, was an undue irritability and sensitiveness, which produced a constant fever of anger and impatience. I wish you, for the New Year, a perfect recovery, and the grace of an unalterably forbearing disposition of heart. May you strive to become like Jesus—"meek and lowly of heart."

You have been weak and ill in the past year,—weak and troubled in spirit; for the fever of envy burned in your veins, and took possession of your hearts. My wish to you, O envious souls, is that you may fully recover from your malady, and that a new heart may be given to each of you—an affectionate, a loving, a generous heart.

Many among you may have, perhaps, welcomed the coming, and witnessed the departing, of many years, during all of which you have been miserable victims to the ills of drunkenness and gluttony, which have tormented your soul and body. My wish to you is, that you give up these degrading vices, and rejoice in the renewal of spiritual health.

And you, sinners, whose favorite passion is impurity, it may be that until now you have suffered constantly from this dreadful spiritual malady. You—but I forget—*this* malady, this fearful vice, not only weakens, but it kills the life of the soul. Yes, every time you consent—in thought, desire, word, or deed—to this

sin, you inflict a mortal wound on your poor soul, until finally you carry it dead within you. Most earnestly do I wish you, therefore, an abiding, an utter abhorrence for this vice—a wish which is most especially addressed to the youth assembled here. Young men and young women, would you, during the coming year, enjoy perfect spiritual health, and live for God? Oh, then, resolve nevermore to be alone with persons of the other sex.

Say not: "I commit no sin." To remain voluntarily in the occasion of sin is a great sin in itself; and even though you feel no temptation yourself, you know not how it is with your companion of the hour.

You may have been, throughout the year, tepid in prayer, wanting in devotion, negligent in attending church, in reading spiritual books, in practising the spiritual and corporal works of mercy, and all this has brought on the dreadful malady of sloth. My earnest wish to all who are thus afflicted is, may you recover entirely from that slow but dangerous fever which has enervated all your faculties, and arise to a new life, which will be marked by the ardent zeal of the saint whose name you bear.

And even as our corporal health is not only connected with the interior, but also with every sense of the body, so does my congratulatory wish to-day refer spiritually to them. For instance, I wish you perfect sight. There are numberless Christians who, in a spiritual sense, possess defective vision. They are short-sighted; or, looking askance at the duties with

which they are bound to comply, pass them by. There are even those who are blind, because they do not *wish to see*. May God preserve you all from this affliction, and keep you from deliberate blindness in matters of salvation. May He, by His holy grace, enable you to see, "with vision bright and clear," the vanity of the world, the frightful malice of sin, the beauty of virtue, the value of time, and all that God wishes and requires of you. May you be delivered from the short-sightedness of the children of this world in matters of salvation. And in regard to the eyes of the body, may God preserve you all from undue curiosity of the eyes, for they are the gates through which the tempter enters; therefore guard them well.

I wish you all perfect *hearing*. In previous years, you may have opened your ears to listen to worldly and sinful conversation which went on around you. Try to undo the error now, and close them fast against the suggestions and temptations of the world. On the other hand, I wish you acute spiritual hearing, that you may clearly and at once perceive the most delicate inspirations of the Holy Ghost.

At the same time, I wish the most acute spiritual sense of smell to you all, that the faintest breath of sin may prove so offensive to you that you will be far removed from the danger of falling into any grievous offense. Also may the sweet *odor* of virtue attract you so irresistibly that nothing will seem sweet or refreshing to you except what is pleasing to Jesus.

I wish you, in fine, a good and discerning spiritual

taste, and spiritual health in perfection, that you may be able to bear, with heroic patience and conformity to the will of God, all injuries, adversities, and sufferings.

How few there are, even among Christians, who remain cheerful and happy when God favors them with troubles and afflictions. Try, then, beloved in Christ, to be among those blessed souls who accept every thing as coming from the hand of God.

The usual wish, at the beginning of the year, goes on thus: "Happiness, length of days, and all that your heart can wish." As to happiness, it depends upon the fulfillment and avoidance of what I have spoken to you to-day; but, in regard to length of days, *that* depends on the manner in which we employ each moment of time, and embrace each opportunity of doing good. Holy Scripture says: "True virtue confers an age venerable with years." I wish you a year filled with merits for life eternal, so that not even one minute of it will be lost. Oh, what an enviable, happy year would not that be!

The conclusion of the greeting is: "And all that your heart can wish." What that is I know not, but I will speak for myself, and say: "What *I* wish for I know, and I include you all in it. It is nothing less than, *here below*, the life of a saint; and, there above, communion with the blessed forever." *This*, beloved in the Lord Jesus, is my wish and greeting for New Year, in the unction and power of that most sweet name, Jesus. Amen!

SECOND SERMON.

“We are absent from the Lord.”—2 Cor. v, 6.

THE swiftly flying hours have come and gone, and another year has forever vanished into the dim and shadowy past, while with faltering steps we enter upon a period of time which will bring for us—we know not what.

Yes, the years come and pass; and not only that, but we pass with them; for we have not been created for this world. “We have not here a lasting city,” but our destination is a happy abode in heaven. In other words, we are not at home, but on our way thereto, and our life is a pilgrimage, of which the words of the Apostle, which I have chosen for my text to-day, can not fail to remind us.

Every thing depends solely on this: whether we are truly on the way to salvation, and perform our parts in every way to insure a happy termination of this pilgrimage to eternity.

In order to understand clearly the individual conditions with which we have to comply, to bring about the above so-much-to-be-desired result, we need only think what preparations a traveler makes before venturing upon a long and dangerous journey.

In this regard, generally speaking, to insure a prosperous journey there are three essentials, the first of which is stability of purpose. Whoever intends setting out upon a journey must begin with decision, go vigor-

ously forward, and remove all obstacles which stand in the way of his desired aim.

O Mary, unto thy patronage we fly; bless us, thy children, especially to-day at the beginning of the year, that, with unwavering zeal, we may tread the path of virtue pointed out to us by thy example, O queen of heaven!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, for the greater honor and glory of God!

In order to arrive safely at the termination of the pilgrimage of life, and reach the goal for which we strive—the joy of heaven—we must imitate the course of the careful traveler who, when about to set out on an earthly pilgrimage, leaves nothing undone that he may arrive securely where he wishes to go. The requisite precautions are in general three: first, he must be thoroughly in *earnest*. This disposition is the more necessary the more dangerous the journey is found to be, and the greater length of time it is expected to last. How essential, therefore, is it not in our pilgrimage to the eternal shore! How much depends upon its possession!

It implies a firm resolution to follow Christ, and to secure a place on the road by which he went before us. In other words, it is that firm will, which angelic spirits wished to men of good will at the birth of our Redeemer: “Peace on earth to men of good will.”

The journey is long, for it lasts until the very latest

breath we draw. It is wearisome, and every step is fraught with perils; therefore the urgent necessity for firmness and a determination to resist every temptation to loiter along the broad and pleasant path which will take us far from our eternal destination. But, alas! such dispositions are to be found among the smallest number, even of those who are of "the household of the faith," and all are not generous enough to say, and to act upon the declaration: "Cost what it may, I will save my soul." How many there are, even of those whose silvery locks and faltering steps show that their end is nigh, who could not with truth point to one year in their lives which they have entered upon with a resolution to amend, *so firm*, that they have never once faltered therein! who have said, and fulfilled the promise: "I will strive to do better during the coming year; to come daily and hourly nearer heaven; to increase my store of merits for that glorious place. I will therefore make constant use of all those means which God has left with His Church; I will lead a life for Him, even though it cost me my dearest earthly joys."

The careful traveler is, above all, mindful to learn every particular in regard to the *road* which he proposes to take, so that he may more speedily and more safely arrive at his journey's end.

Let us thank God that we are children of His holy Church, which, in the most explicit manner, tells us all we wish to know. Yes; she informs us by her holy faith, which brilliantly illuminates the way to heaven,

that none can fail to find the path, or to remain in ignorance of what is essential to know, in order to fulfill the holy will of God.

The traveler is always concerned as to the enjoyment and happiness which will be his when his destination has been happily reached, and gives frequent thought to the trouble he would experience should he fail to reach it at all. This shows how essential it is that the pilgrim, who aims at heaven, should, at the recurrence of every year, consider with deep attention how he can live on earth so as to increase his bliss in heaven, and dwell forever amid its celestial joys.

How the generality of Christians can give so little thought to this, is indeed a mystery. They think more of the worldly goods, honors, and pleasures which they may gain in the course of the year than of heaven, one joy of which by far outweighs them all.

Thus they are but too often not in earnest in their resolution to begin a life which would lead them nearer to heaven, but are content to live as every-day Christians, advancing no further in the fervent love of God.

The *second* condition necessary for arriving safely at a desired destination is *health*; therefore, whoever intends setting out on a journey must take all possible care not to fall ill. This indicates an essential requisite for a happy pilgrimage to eternity; which is, that he who is traveling thither must preserve his soul in the state of sanctifying grace—the principle of the supernatural life of the soul.

Every mortal sin which man is so unfortunate as to

commit withdraws this principle of spiritual life from him ; therefore, beloved in the Lord Jesus, if this day finds you in the state of mortal sin, cleanse your souls therefrom by a good, a sincere, and contrite confession, that, with the beginning of the year, the grace of God may enable you to do all things. But merely *to live* is not enough for the happy ending of a long and perilous journey, especially if it be made *on foot*, which, indeed, is the most fitting way for the pilgrim, and typifies the course of the wanderer whose goal is heaven, and who must proceed step by step alone, depends on *health*.

Health being essential for a safe and pleasant earthly journey, the application, in a spiritual sense, is this : we must not, and *dare* not, feel spiritually weak and ill, but strong and resolute, courageous and hopeful, and in these dispositions grasp firmly the staff of the path of salvation, never looking back, but, with unshaken determination, striving to advance daily in the way marked out by Christ.

It is also necessary to provide, in time, for all that will be needed on a journey, to guard, by this means, against any delay on the road. And this also has its application in a spiritual sense. At the beginning of the year, therefore, it is well to make firm resolutions to employ its every moment in promoting the great affair of our salvation, not losing any precious time. That we may be able to do this :

Let us examine ourselves with the utmost diligence as to what may have caused us to fritter away so many

golden moments in the past. Was it by undue anxiety as to temporal affairs? by unprofitable or even injurious companionship? by idleness or some other cause equally hurtful to spirituality? Oh, what a bright era in our heavenward way might not this new year become, if, as its days roll on and pass away, we would not, through any fault of ours, lose one single moment of its precious *time*! To aid us in this, we should, at the beginning of every day, make an intention to do every thing for the love of God, and frequently renew our resolution to fail in nothing which He requires of us, fulfilling in the most perfect manner possible all the duties of our state.

Yet, beloved in Christ, we must not be content with this, for, whoever wishes to reach the loftier heights of virtue will zealously use every opportunity, and even search for such, to practise acts of Christian heroism in working for the salvation of souls. We must be fervent in prayer, in hearing Mass, in the practice of spiritual reading, and the frequent reception of the Sacraments. The more use we make of these means of grace during the present year, the more rapidly we shall proceed on our heavenward way, and the sweeter joy will constantly animate our hearts.

Happy he who thus proceeds on his pilgrimage to heaven. He feels no weariness of spirit, but, on the contrary, may cry out with holy David: "I have run in the way of thy commandments when thou didst enlarge my heart."

The *third* condition necessary for a successful jour-

ney is final *perseverance*, which is the reward of courage and fidelity in the resolution to conquer all difficulties, impediments, and dangers.

In regard to the way of salvation, there is but one impediment, and that is sin ; for, whatever others may exist, true love of the cross will not only overcome them all, but transform them into means by which the goal is more speedily reached. All sin, even the slightest, is, and will ever be, an impediment, and is so conducive to everlasting destruction that, by listening but once to the tempter's voice, we often entirely deviate from the way to heaven, or at least retrograde sadly thereon.

The cautious traveler looks not only before, but all around him, in every direction to avoid falling into any danger which may lurk unseen ; and the Christian must, in a spiritual point of view, do the same, that he may guard against all those temptations which lie in wait to wreck his soul.

Dearly beloved in Christ Jesus, as pilgrims journeying to a heavenly land, make good use of these rules which I have laid before you, during the year of which you have been permitted to see the beginning, and apply them also during each succeeding year that God in his mercy permits you to behold. Do so with ever-increasing zeal, with aspirations constantly directed towards heaven ; then you shall undoubtedly, through the assistance of the Most High, arrive at the longed-for termination of your pilgrimage, the true home of the just—heaven ! Amen !

THIRD SERMON.

“I am the Light of the world.”—John viii, 12.

BEHOLD the first day which the sun, this year, illuminates! How noble and sublime is this magnificent wonder of nature! What untold blessings it diffuses as it pursues its daily course, by which we compute the days, weeks, months, and years of our life! Sending its rays forth over the visible world—the firmament and the earth on which we live—the sun imparts growth, fruitfulness, and color to all upon which they fall. Can we imagine what would become of us were the sun to rise no more? What lamentations would be heard on every side at the overwhelming magnitude of the calamity; what wretchedness, what despair would seize upon mankind at the entire overthrow of all terrestrial prosperity!

What the sun is for our earthly life, for its constant welfare, that is Christ for the life of the Christian, in the creation of grace. He diffuses light, life, consolation, and blessings. Without Him all is darkness and decay; there is corruption and disease of the soul, hardness of heart, and, at last, spiritual death. The Church calls Christ the “Sun of justice;” He styles himself the “Light of the world;” and this will decide to-day the subject of my meditation on the feast, and indicate at the same time my heartfelt congratulations to you all for New Year’s day. I would also request your

particular attention to this sermon, because it is the first one of the year.

May Christ, throughout its course, as the Sun of justice, diffuse for every one of us in a spiritual relation all the blessings which the sun in the order of nature will produce on earth; then the new year will be for all a source of grace, and each of its days will bring us nearer heaven.

O Mary, Aurora of that day whose sun is Christ, Mother of Him who is called the Light of the world, obtain for us the grace to lay up rich treasures of merit for heaven during the year which we have just entered upon!

I speak in the holy name of Jesus, for the greater honor and glory of God!

The sun distributes *light*. This is his essential character. He is the star of the day—he it is who causes day to be day. By his light, which so radiantly beams forth, we behold the things around us, know them, estimate them at their true value, and apply them for our own use and benefit. The light of the sun is particularly necessary during a journey, to point out and enlighten the way, that we may safely walk therein. It is precisely the same for us in the kingdom of truth, in regard to the work of salvation, with Christ, the Sun of the spiritual world, through whom beams forth the true knowledge of God, and our relation to Him as our last aim and end.

Without Christ there can be no true knowledge of God, of ourselves, or of the road we must take if we desire to serve God, if we are resolved to do His holy will, and to become forever blessed. Without Christ we could possess no knowledge of what will one day come when, after death, we shall have entered upon the mystery of eternity. The proof of this is to be found in that gross and blinded heathenism which existed both before and after the birth of the Redeemer; but still more in that night of gloom which weighs upon the spirits of those faithless Catholics who, false to Christ and His Church, turn away entirely from His vivifying light. A darkness so black and impenetrable enshrouds the spirits of those enemies of God that they go far towards denying His existence; for instead of rejoicing at the glory to which, through Christ, they have been called—that of being a child of God—they degrade themselves to such a depth as not to hesitate to proclaim their belief that their remote ancestors sprang from a breed of chattering apes.

And this darkness they call light! Oh, what blindness of spirit exists where Christ is not! On the other hand, what spiritual light and knowledge are through Christ shed over each faithful soul, from the untutored savage in the African or Australian desert to the most highly educated scholar on earth. In consideration of this, St. Peter spoke with perfect justice when, in a spirit of congratulation, he cried out to us: "You are called into a wonderful light."

Through his word Christ lifts the veil which is cast

over the abyss of eternity of the divine essence and nature, and we confess the triune God in all His glory and majesty. He lifts the vail which hangs over the creation itself, and we are enabled to give an account from the very moment when the world first sprang into existence, called by an almighty power from chaos dark and drear; we can tell of the creation and fall of man, of his redemption, and of the way of salvation which He has vouchsafed to us.

He lifts the vail which conceals futurity, and we gaze, in the light of faith with St. John, through the "massy gates" of heaven, in anticipation of that which shall one day come, and we see it, as St. Paul remarks, even now as "in a dark manner through a glass." For this it is essential that we confess the truths of faith not with the lips only, but ponder on them in spirit, and try to live in accordance with them.

In this year upon which we have just entered, therefore, may thorough instruction in the truths of our holy faith, frequent meditation thereon, and loving intercourse with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, shed over our souls this light of knowledge which is the gift of holy faith, and cause it to grow daily more and more brilliant in them.

God said, "Let there be light, and there was light." May the word of the Creator also as Redeemer be accomplished in us this year, in order that the all-important affair of our salvation in its own eternal greatness may place itself permanently before our spiritual eyes.

The sun imparts to objects their natural color, and we all know that things frequently assume quite a different hue if they are illuminated by artificial means; but let them be subjected to the light of the sun, and the delusion will pass away, while the true color will be visible once more.

It is thus that with dazzled eyes many look upon the things of this world in quite a different light. Entirely given up to the spirit of the world, it represents every thing to them in the most fascinating light, and invests its joys with magnificent colors, which in reality they do not possess; yet such is their power to charm, that even a Solomon might easily be deceived.

The light of the sun of faith through Christ will banish all delusion; and, vivified by its warm and genial rays, the Christian will behold in its true light the nothingness of the joys of earth, and will be ready to cry out from the depths of his heart, "Vanity of vanities!"

The sun distributes through his light, also, *life*, *growth*, and *prosperity*. If the glorious orb of day would suddenly cease to rise, what would be the consequence? Intense cold, impenetrable darkness, and universal desolation. All thought of seed-time and harvest would be at an end; there would be no storing up of food; nor, indeed, would life exist, for death would come upon the world.

By the vivifying course of the sun the face of the earth is renewed each year. Each germ, each blossom, of the coming fruit, as well as its gradual growth

and final perfection, owes its existence to the genial heat which the sun pours over the earth. Through it the air is filled with strong and vigorous life for every creature which breathes therein. The light of the sun insures, therefore, in the kingdom of nature, life, fructification, and increase ; and as the sun in the creation of grace, Christ exercises the same influence upon our spiritual nature. "In Him was the life," St. John testifies, "and the life was the light of man." He it is, as the same St. John again testifies, "who enlightens every man that cometh into the world."

The fall into sin had weakened within us the life in God in its supernatural relation, but Christ invested us anew with the right to become children of God at the very moment when through Him the life of sanctifying grace entered into our souls. He it is also who permits that we in our different states of life comport ourselves as children of God, bear fruit for life eternal, and grow up in His imitation to that standard of virtue for which we were sent into the world.

Christ himself places clearly before our eyes the influence which He would exercise upon our lives in and for God, by the words : "I am the vine, you are the branches ; without me you can do nothing." Do you hear, beloved in Christ ? Nothing, absolutely nothing meritorious for eternal life. But, strengthened in Christ, united with Him, we are all permitted to say with St. Paul, "I can do all through Him who strengthens me."

This is shown in a most wonderfully clear manner by the lives of the saints, those true children of light.

Let us therefore, encouraged by their bright example, endeavor to walk like them in the imitation of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, with the new year, and thus arrive at such an intimate union with Him that it will one day be our privilege to exclaim with St. Paul, "I live, but not myself. . . . In me lives Christ."

The sun affords *comfort* and *solace* to man, and as soon as it has sunk behind the western hills the shadows of night gather over the earth and envelop it in a garb of somber hue. Trouble which befalls us during the night, always assumes an additional shade of gloom; but when morning dawns and the sun sends forth its genial rays, the sorrowing heart is, almost unconsciously, cheered and consoled.

In a far greater degree is this true of Christ, the Light of the spiritual world, for without Him there can be no solace in the obscure night of the soul, no mitigation of pain in this valley of tears; but, refreshed through Him, enlightened through His word as to the value of sufferings patiently borne through pure love of God, we are permitted to sigh with St. Paul, in every affliction, "I overflow with joy in the midst of sorrow." The assertions of the saints in this regard most unequivocally prove this, and the experience of every one who knows and loves Jesus, and is resolved to walk, after Him, the royal way of the cross to heaven, confirms it also.

And when the sun shall be darkened, and finally disappear, what woe and desolation will break forth over the whole world! Then, however, Christ, the Sun of

justice, will shine in the full splendor of His glory, for the everlasting joy and happiness of all those who followed Him on earth and walked in his celestial light. But can we picture to ourselves the reverse, and view in spirit the gloom, the woe, the utter desolation of those who turned away the eyes of the soul from this Sun? The eternal Judge will direct to them these terrible words: "Depart from me!" Everlasting darkness will cover them as they sink into the abode of never-ending torments, where untold misery and horror dwell.

May Christ, in this year and in all the years that are to come for us, so illumine the pathway of life that we may follow His guiding light, and at last behold Him as the Sun of justice in the kingdom of His glory!—Amen!

VIGIL OF THE FEAST OF EPIPHANY.

NOTE.—My reason for adding a sermon for this vigil can be thus explained: Every seventh year it falls upon a Sunday, upon which the gospel of the vigil is read. However, I give, for this exceptional case, but *one* sermon, since it very seldom occurs; and this one will treat of a theme regarding which every pastor, after the lapse of six years, should speak to his congregation. It is a very important and practical one.

“And he arose, and took the child and its mother, and came into the land of Israel.”—Matt. 2.

THREE times, as the Gospel narrates, an angel appeared to St. Joseph in a dream, and spoke to him; and every time he immediately complied with the injunctions which he received—and *was silent*.

The angel spoke to Joseph, but not *he* to the angel, although, as St. Chrysostom, in the spirit of wisdom, remarks: There would have been reason enough for some words, for surely the dear saint must have had certain questions to ask. Even Mary spoke with the angel. Joseph remained silent; and we have no record in Holy Scripture of a single word that he uttered.

Mary, together with St. Joseph, sought the child Jesus, sorrowing, and found him in the temple. The loving mother exclaimed: “Why hast Thou done this to us?” but his foster-father remained silent; and it

would seem that, by this silence, a deep mystery of faith is implied, in perfect accord with the calling of him who was chosen to be the earthly father of the Saviour, and the representative of his heavenly Father. The eternal Father never spoke to the human race, since, as St. Paul says, in his Epistle to the Hebrews: "So God spoke in the beginning always by his angels with men."

So He did on Mount Sinai, when the law was announced to the chosen people of God; and to Moses in the burning bush, as St. Paul also says; and, lastly, through his only-begotten Son.

Certainly, in *this* regard, the silence of St. Joseph can not serve as a model for us, but, in other cases, which very often occur in life, it can. All of them are contained in the principle:

Never to murmur against divine Providence, but to bear all sufferings—whatsoever that God sees fit to send us—with patience for love of Him.

O Mary, mother of sorrows, who stood beneath the cross without a murmur, obtain for us the resignation of thy chaste spouse, St. Joseph!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, for the greater honor of God!

An angel appeared to St. Joseph in a dream, and bade him fly with Mary and the child into Egypt; and, without one single question, he immediately arose and departed that very night. And the same spirit of obe-

dience continued to influence him; for we read of his return to Palestine as soon as his angelic visitant again appeared in a dream and bade him retrace his steps.

If we give proper attention to this rare virtue—silence—which characterized the saint whom we delight to honor to-day, we will be inspired to accept lovingly all the trials which the Lord pleases to send, and bear them without a murmur. That St. Joseph was a just man, the Scripture gives unequivocal testimony; and, after his immaculate spouse, he may be considered the greatest among the saints—a distinction which he merits from his relations to Jesus and Mary. But the pure gold of his virtue was destined to be tested in the crucible of the weary toils, labors, and troubles of life; and his silence, in every phase, is a most eloquent proof of the perfection of his union with the most holy will of God.

As it was for Mary, so also was it for him the favorite maxim in life: "I am a servant of the Lord; may it be done to me according to His word."

St. Joseph was silent. This silence, at the command of the angel to undertake the long and toilsome journey, proves that his was a living faith in the disposition of Divine Providence, and the wisdom of the Lord in ordaining all things. He neither asked nor thought why he should set off in such haste to Egypt; nor whether there could not be found a place in Israel where he might conceal himself with Mary and the little Infant without traversing the desert's burning sands. He neither asked nor wondered why the flight was even necessary

for the Incarnate Son of God ; why, since He was God as well as Man, He could not conceal or protect Himself ; or, by a sudden death, take Herod from this world, that all might be well. Nothing of all this found a place in the heart of the great St. Joseph. No ; he let God order all things for him, and thought of the hidden counsels of the Lord ; for, as St. Paul most justly asks : “ Who was his Counsellor ? ”

He obeyed and was silent, making no inquiries as to how he would provide for the holy family in Egypt—a land where all to him was new and strange. He trusted in God, and hoped, with Abraham, the father of the faithful, against hope. This holy silence points, at the same time, to his deep humility and self-denial. He neither asked nor thought why the angels might not come to transport him, with the mother and child, from Palestine to Egypt through the air, as they did with Elias—who was conveyed in a fiery chariot to heaven—and as was done with the prophet Habacuc.

The Blessed Virgin was to ride to Egypt on a beast of burden, while St. Joseph was to walk by her side, which he did with an alacrity and pleasure all the greater that he had thereby an opportunity of proving his love for Jesus and Mary, for whose comfort on the journey he evinced the utmost solicitude. He was silent, but his heart conversed with God in those unutterable sighs of the Holy Spirit, as St. Paul expresses himself in speaking of the hidden life in God through the practice of prayer.

The silence of St. Joseph points to his interior con-

templative life. Prayer is the source of all grace; speaking of which St. Paul again says: "I can do all in Him who strengthens me." So St. Joseph traveled in silence to Egypt with the mother and child, and in silence he returned. What a lesson for us! What an example to imitate! Too often, however, it presents a striking contrast to the general conduct of Christians. How few, even among the children of the Church, submit, in silence and with resignation, in the trials of life, to the most holy will of God! and how often we hear the most unreasonable complaints from those who can not resolve to "kiss the hand that smites them!"

And, worse than all, the wicked murmuring against God, into which these complaints degenerate, fills the heart with despondency, gives scandal, and deprives the offender of those sufferings which, had they been patiently borne, would have one day changed into bright gems to adorn a heavenly crown. This rebellion is the cause of our frequently committing grievous faults; and whence comes it, then, beloved in Christ, that man encourages such dispositions, that he complains and mourns as one without hope? Because he does not possess the virtues of St. Joseph, of which I have spoken to you. His faith in the all-disposing providence of God is not sufficient. "No evil in the city which is not made by the Lord," as we read in the Old Testament; by which we are to understand that whatever happens by the divine permission is for our salvation,—we must see in it His divine hand, and bow

to the most holy will of God. We are too prone to look upon the occurrences in this world, in the light of the present, as they place themselves before our eyes, never considering that the Lord has ordained them, in a most wonderful manner, for some wise end, hidden from us at the time, but fully revealed at a later period in life. Thus what we suffered so keenly from, and what we at the moment considered a great evil, may have been, in reality, sent to promote our eternal salvation ; but, beguiled and deceived by self-love and self-will, we venture to challenge our Creator, as it were, to give an account of what He permits to befall us. This is because we are deficient in the humility and self-denial of St. Joseph. He was just ; he was, through his relation to Jesus and Mary, by his royal blood and freedom from all personal sins, elevated to the highest rank in heaven above all the other saints.

We suffer and murmur, yet we have, perhaps, committed sins, and, it may be, deserved hell. Happy for us if the Lord changes the eternal punishment incurred and merited by our mortal sins into a temporal penalty after the guilt has been forgiven,

And although we had even already blotted out this punishment through penance and indulgences, does not God give us, through sufferings, particularly when they are unmerited, the most precious opportunity to lay up the richest store of merits, and to cast the greatest weight upon the scale of heavenly joys ? Think of Mary, herself, who stood as Queen of Martyrs beneath the cross.

Who could think of her and murmur? Who could behold that loving mother enduring her sorrow in silence, and not accept their trouble as coming, not from man, but from God? The devout and humble Christian will, with St. Joseph, thank and praise the Lord; for the more patiently we carry our cross in His imitation, the more like unto Him we shall become—the more precious shall we be in His sight. Yes, the nearer we follow Him in life, the nearer we shall be to Him in His empire of glory.

Joseph remained silent,—we murmur and complain. Why? We are wanting in that spirit of zeal in prayer which should enkindle and increase in us the fire of divine love, and strengthen us to suffer even with joy. We are also wanting in that ardent love toward Jesus and Mary, which ever reminds us that they walked first in the royal road of the holy cross. Let us, then, suffer, without a murmur, all that Christ is pleased to send us; for He often rewards us, even here below, with the benediction of His divine love. Child of the Church, do you hear this? Oh, what a day of grace for you will not that be upon which you resolve firmly never more to murmur at the will of God! Oh, may it be to-day! What should particularly encourage you is, that there are but few who suffer with patience, and you should delight in being the one to give an edifying example.

Consider, finally, how quickly and with what determination St. Joseph obeyed the command of the angel. The Gospel says: "Immediately he arose from

sleep and set out upon his journey." Might he not have remained sleeping until morning? This feature in his character stands in strong contrast to one which is often prominent in the life of the every-day Christian. I allude to a fatal delay in putting in practice the resolution to do good—to lead a better life. Men make resolutions for the sanctification of their lives, but there is no earnestness of purpose. They neglect to fulfill them until at last they entirely abandon the idea of leading a better life; and, instead of advancing in the way of Christian perfection, they retrograde. Beloved in Christ, resolve, from this very moment, that it shall be otherwise with you.

The Feast of the Epiphany, whose vigil we celebrate to-day, most beautifully confirms all that I have said by the example of the holy three kings. They also, as soon as they beheld the star, arose and set out on their journey. They were rewarded, for they found the Infant God.

Their first question was: "Where is He?" and, as soon as they received the answer, their generous and loving hearts gave little thought to what Jerusalem might think or say. The opinion of the world troubled them not; but, firm in their resolve to find Him, they followed the star. Happy for you, beloved in Christ, if you, with the dispositions of the Magi, prostrate yourself before the Infant Jesus; and, as they offered their gifts to Him, do you, from the depths of your hearts, make this solemn promise:

"O Divine Child, from this very moment I resolve

to accept whatever sufferings Thou dost please to send, without a murmur; and henceforth to fulfill my resolution without delay."

This will be an offering more precious than gold, frankincense, or myrrh; for it is a holocaust of your love to Jesus and Mary, for the greater honor and glory of God, for your own salvation, and the salvation of others. Amen!

FEAST OF THE EPIPHANY.

FIRST SERMON.

“We have seen His star, and are come to adore Him.”—Matt. ii, 2.

THE festival of the Epiphany, also called the Feast of the Holy Three Kings, is one of the most ancient feasts of the Church of God; and from the very earliest ages was celebrated with special rejoicing by the children of the Catholic Church. We find the cause for this in the fact that this feast is associated with the remembrance of the greatest graces in which the faithful in every nation of the earth rejoice,—namely, their call to the only saving faith, the holy Catholic Church.

We learn from sacred history, that in the early days of Christianity this feast was celebrated with greater solemnity even than Christmas, the birthday of our Lord himself; for as the Church exclaims in her joy on Holy Saturday: “Of what use would it be for us to be born if we had not been made partakers of the benefits of redemption?”

So might we cry out: “Of what use to us would it be to possess all the goods and pleasures of the world, if the grace of being called to the true faith had not been granted to us through the mercy of God?”

The three kings with their attendants, prostrate at the feet of the Infant Jesus, were the firstlings of the heathens who acknowledged Jesus, and entered His Church. As we reflect upon the great happiness vouchsafed to them, the question forces itself upon us: "Why do not all nations likewise enjoy a participation in their happiness?" My answer is:

"Because they do not look upward with the same love of truth to the star of the Magi;" and this, as I understand it, I will explain to-day.

O Mary, Queen of heaven and earth, Mother of the King of kings, obtain for us, from your divine Son, hearts deeply penetrated with the love of truth!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, for the greater glory of God!

Christ, before whom the three Magi knelt, calls himself the King of Truth. He calls His kingdom, the Church, a kingdom of truth; consequently, whosoever will enter His kingdom, and find therein salvation must love truth and seek it; then he will find it, follow it, and through its influence attain salvation.

It was thus that the hearts of the Magi were disposed; therefore they learned to know Jesus and the truth contained in His Church, to live in her spirit, propagate the kingdom of Christ, and at last to enter the realm of His glory.

They saw the star, knew its signification, and followed it. Why? *They loved truth.* Had not this been

the case, the annunciation of the birth of our Saviour through the star would not have excited so much interest in them.

Had they not loved truth more than the goods and pleasures of this world, which, as crowned heads, they possessed in abundance, they would not have undertaken, at the cost of so much self-sacrifice, to seek for Christ.

But they were more interested in obtaining the truth of salvation, in beholding the coming Teacher of nations, in learning to honor and adore Him, than in all the treasures of the world. Their resolution to search for Him was sublimely heroic.

If their eagerness for knowledge of heavenly things had not existed to so great a degree in their hearts, they might have thought within themselves: "It is well that He is born; He will surely arrange to come to us to teach us, or He will send some one else in His place. Besides, He is still a child, and can not converse with us, wherefore, then, should we undertake a journey connected with so many difficulties, and, perhaps, expose ourselves to the derision and mockery of the people of Jerusalem, to whom, it may be, the star did not appear?"

All these circumstances, however, were of no weight with the three Magi, in whom eager desire, and ardent love overpowered all other considerations, and they entered upon their journey.

The three sages searched for truth with assiduity and fearlessness. "Where is He who is to be born

the King of the Jews?" Thus they inquired, full of confidence that their search would be rewarded, let the population of Jerusalem think what they would; let them mock and ridicule; did they but know the name of the place where the Messiah was to be born, according to the declaration of the prophets, they would find the way thereto, even if they could gain no companions for the journey, which it would seem was eventually the case, as they left Jerusalem alone. The star again appeared, and remained over the place wherein Mary abode with the child. They fall down before the divine Infant, and oh! with what joyful sentiments of adoration, love, and gratitude do they offer Him their homage! But, on the other hand, how graciously did the new-born babe bless them, and replenish their hearts with the power and unction of His grace; how did it strengthen them in their resolution to follow His inspirations, to live and die for Him, and to spread His kingdom among their people all over the earth!

The three Magi searched for the truth, found it, and returned, obedient to the admonition of an angel, by another road to their respective homes, thus to escape the snares of Herod, and to fulfill the will of God.

It was thus, that these first fruits of faith in countries over which the dark cloud of heathenism still rested, gave the example unto all the children of men, how to know Christ and to enter heaven. And what is the reason that, up to this time, this was not done

in such a manner as the mercy of God intended, for the evils of all mankind?

I answer by the assertion that love for truth is, in general, rare among men. They love darkness better than light,—delusion, which flatters them, more than the truth, which points to the exercise of duty, which teaches the spirit of Christian self-denial, which inspires contempt of human consideration, united with that fidelity which assures for us perseverance unto the end.

The gospel for to-day affirms that Herod, and with him all Jerusalem, was terrified at the message of the three Magi, that the Saviour, the King and Deliverer of the human race, was born. Herod was afraid, and trembled lest he should lose his throne. The scribes and Pharisees also, those whitened sepulchres of evil, as Christ called them, instead of rejoicing, were filled with alarm; for they felt, and truly, that the promised Messiah would penetrate their interior, and censure their hypocrisy and malice.

The people principally imitate those who have the power to govern or command them, and generally yield to the stronger will of men whose knowledge is superior to their own. They also felt disappointed, because they expected an earthly Messiah, who would elevate them to be the mightiest nation in the world, and endow them with all temporal advantages, riches, and pleasures. Yet now they hear He has entered this world without His advent being perceived, and, whilst the scribes remain in entire ignorance of His

birth, men in the East are said to have seen His star, which nevertheless was not beheld by a single person in Jerusalem.

Love for truth was lacking in those who thus expressed themselves, and, therefore, they remained incredulous and indifferent, and did not even trouble themselves so far as to guide or direct the Magi to the vicinity of Bethlehem; nay, they probably regarded them as visionaries and dreamers. Behold here, as in a mirror, the character of the infidel, especially of those who, with premeditation, become infidels,—who, although born of Catholic parents, and brought up in the Church of God, later on, play the infidel, and pretend to waver in faith.

Such do not love truth, but the desire of their hearts is to find out what might make them rich and happy in this world. As regards their duties towards God—that is, with respect to religion—the generality of men are satisfied to live and die in that belief in which they were born, and do not inquire whether their religion is really the true religion.

Yes, a great portion, particularly of the so-called learned men, are afraid to recognize the truth, that they may not feel urged to confess and live according to its precepts. And, since they know that the word of truth condemns their sinful actions, and threatens them with terrible chastisements from God, they hate it, and wish that they could totally extirpate the kingdom of Christ on earth. If they, at times, arrive at the conviction that all their endeavors in this regard

are fruitless,—and if, at certain times, the voice of conscience whispers loudly that the threatenings of the Lord might one day be verified in them on account of their infidelity, then, in secret, like Herod, they tremble, and a fear, which for the time can not be stilled, fastens upon their souls.

Certainly they endeavor to appear, with all this, entirely different from what they are, and, therefore, become hypocrites, as Herod was. They assume the appearance of respecting God and His commands, Christ and His doctrines, but their actions do not correspond with their demeanor, for they persecute the Church with the direct intention to destroy her. Thereat they are filled with the suspicion which terrified the heart of Herod, that the Church would be dangerous to their plans. This is especially the case with rulers of the present day and with infidel politicians, although the experiences of the nineteenth century should long ago have opened their eyes, and forced them to see that the Holy Church not alone in spiritual, but in temporal affairs, exercises a most beneficial influence upon the state.

They think to conquer by their cunning, just as Herod thought, but God's providence brings them to disgrace. I point especially to one propensity in the character of Herod, a fit type of this worthy class. He became a tyrant, and committed infanticide.

This also resembles, especially in our days, the conduct of the enemies of the truths of faith. Such men, if they succeed in grasping the reins of government,

proceed to persecution, and as they are endowed with an evil prudence, they recognize that nothing can promote their ideas better than to pervert the Catholic youth to their dangerous ideas, and seek to destroy in their hearts the life of holy faith.

Therefore their solicitude to impede the influence of the Church in the education of youth, with which that infanticide, of which Herod was guilty, is not to be compared.

Herod benefited the souls of the Holy Innocents against their will, whilst the Herods in our days corrupt the youth and destroy their souls. What crime! Therefore, children of the Church, thank God for your call to the only true Church—to the holy faith! Like the Magi, love the truth with all sincerity of heart. This disposition of heart is a pledge of victory over Lucifer, the “liar from the beginning.” Hold every-where and always to this maxim of life: “Defend truth, and it will defend you and save you through Jesus Christ, the incarnate truth.”—Amen!

SECOND SERMON.

“Where is he that is born King of the Jews?”—Matt. ii, 2.

IT was desired that the promised Messiah should be an heir of the throne of David, as the Lord declared by the mouth of his prophets. This promise was also well known to the scribes, for when Herod called them together and inquired of them where Christ was to be born, they answered without hesitation so it is written by the prophet: “Thou, Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda; for out of thee shall come forth the Prince who shall rule my people Israel.”

Even though Herod already reigned as king, and an heir was born to him, nevertheless the sages did not hesitate to ask where the King of the Jews was born. Thus they addressed him, and they would have inquired of him in the same way even if Herod had not been a dependent of Rome, but the most powerful monarch upon earth, and the Roman emperor himself.

For what are all the princes, kings, and emperors on earth, in comparison with Christ, the heir to the throne of David, the King of angels, to whom all power is given in heaven and on earth? And furthermore, what are all the kingdoms on earth in comparison with that kingdom ruled by Christ, which extends over the entire creation, and whose glory has no end?

The subject of my consideration to-day will be the royal crown of Christ, and the character of his eternal kingdom.

O Mary, royal Mother and co-regent in the kingdom of your divine Son, protect us, that we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ, and deserve to reign one day with Him.

I speak in the holy name of Jesus, for the greater glory of God!

“And I saw Him; He was clothed in a white garment, His head decked with many diadems, and on His thigh were written the words: ‘King of kings, Lord of lords.’” Thus St. John describes Christ, whom he beheld in His royal dignity in heaven.

Christ, as God-man, is King, as He himself testified when, in presence of Pilate, the question was put to Him—“Art thou the King of the Jews?”—and He answered, “Thou sayest it.” He is not only King, as the heir of the royal family of David, with all the prerogatives enjoyed by other monarchs, but, as Jesus, He is the King of kings. To Him belongs this dignity and honor because He possesses all the properties of a king perfectly, if we consider either His person or the nature of His eternal kingdom. How happy should we therefore feel to be subjects of such a King, citizens of such a kingdom!

First, in regard to the personal perfections of this King: where in this world is there a ruler who can be

compared to Jesus! As the Son of God, He is infinite Majesty, the Creator and Arbiter of the universe. As man, He is the noblest creature which the omnipotence of God ever called into existence; distinguished by every quality which can adorn a ruler.

If a ruler be distinguished by talents and knowledge, he stands before his people as the most learned and wisest man in the whole kingdom; pre-eminent not only by his personal dignity, but by his virtues and exemplary life; just, benevolent, magnanimous, benign, merciful, and full of sympathy for the welfare of his people. I need only mention these qualities, and every one who believes in Christ, who knows and confesses His name, will immediately recognize how incomparably great and divine He is even as man, surpassing in perfection all earthly sovereigns.

Yes, even as man, through His personal union with God, He is the omniscient Son. Before Him all things are manifest, for He is the One who testifies of himself: "All power is given to me in heaven and upon earth."

As man, He is the One of whom St. Paul testifies: "God hath exalted Him, and hath given Him a name which is above every other name, that in the name of Jesus every knee shall bend in heaven, on earth, and in hell."

"And I saw Him adorned with many diadems," writes St. John. These are the diadems of His glory, dignity, and power as King of Angels and Archangels, of Principalities, heavenly Powers and Dominations, of Thrones,

Cherubim and Seraphim, and King of all saints, according to their different choirs.

He is, besides, the incarnate benignity of God, as St. Paul calls Him; and also the Judge who is to come one day to judge the world, and who will be ready to share with all upon whom He has been able to pass a favorable decision before His tribunal, the eternal joys of heaven. Nay more, who is prepared to share with each true child of the Church His own power and dignity, His own beatitude, in virtue of that assurance which we read in the Apocalypse of St. John: "The vanquisher I let sit with me upon my throne." He it is who, when we enter into His kingdom, will confer upon us also the dignity of royalty, to rule with Him for all eternity, as we read in the Apocalypse.

And we, the ransomed souls of men, the children of the Church, and citizens of His kingdom, are permitted to call the King of glory our Father, our friend, and the spouse of our souls. Oh, what happiness, what honor, what glory, for time and eternity!

Not only do the striking features of the personality glorify Christ as the King of kings, and arouse in us the desire to live, to fight, to conquer, and to die, under His rule, but His kingdom likewise stands forth as the most glorious among the kingdoms of earth.

A kingdom is the more distinguished the more extensive it is—the more countries it comprises, the more productive its sources are, to support, to enrich its inhabitants, and to insure their temporal prosperity; the more beautiful its situation, the more attractive are its

landscapes, its meadows, its suburbs, and all its natural advantages. Greater dignity and importance are attached to a kingdom in proportion as its inhabitants are distinguished by their accomplishments ; and according to their strength, stature, and civilization, they appear more powerful in respect of other countries.

Such is the kingdom of Christ. It extends over all the earth and throughout the entire heavens. It comprises the whole world, with all the beauties and glories with which God has enriched and adorned it. To the number of its citizens belong all the choirs of holy angels—those innumerable radiant spirits and glorious princes of heaven who, filled with delight, adore their King. There, too, are all the blessed saints, according to their various ranks. In this kingdom is to be found superabundant provision for every means of grace, by which we are enabled to accomplish all for God ; and, furnished with them, we are invincible, and enabled to increase each moment our future treasures in the kingdom of recompense. Who should not feel happy to be a citizen of this kingdom, and endeavor to spread it, in order that all the souls redeemed by Christ may one day enjoy this happiness !

This desire becomes more ardent on account of the following circumstances : The kingdom of Christ is a kingdom of truth and of light, existing to make man happy for time and eternity.

In opposition to this stands the kingdom of darkness, the kingdom of evil, the kingdom which inevitably drags down to eternal woe and misery the wretched

creatures who rally round its infernal king. To this kingdom Herod belonged, and with him all who persecuted Christ and nailed Him to the cross.

If we do not belong to the kingdom of Christ, then we are subjects of that kingdom which acknowledges Lucifer as its leader and prince.

Christ said: "He who is not with me, is against me;" and the consideration of this truth should exercise the greatest influence upon our lives and strengthen the desire to belong on earth to the kingdom of Christ, that we may one day share in heaven in the kingdom of His eternal transfiguration.

The condition for obtaining this is that He who reigns in heaven has His throne in our hearts, and that He directs and governs them according to His own good pleasure.

Beloved Christians, that this may be the case, our hearts must be so adorned as to be a habitation worthy of the King of kings; that is, we must be in the state of grace, or else we cease to be zealous children of His Church, for not He, but Satan will erect his throne in our hearts. Albeit that, to all appearances, man be a child of the Church, still Christ does not abide in his heart until he consecrates all the powers of his soul and body to the service of the Lord.

Christ rules still more royally in our hearts when He governs our understanding through holy faith, so that not the least shadow of infidelity nor heterodoxy can lead it astray.

Christ reigns royally in our will when He directs it

according to His own good pleasure, and we do not oppose Him by placing any obstacle in the way, but render to Him wholly and entirely the free offering of our will.

He reigns as King in our hearts if we are inflamed with ardent love for Him, and are ready for any sacrifice which we may be called upon to make in His holy service.

The more the kingdom of darkness, the kingdom of evil, nowadays endeavors to combat the kingdom of Christ and to promote that of Antichrist, the more ardent and resolute should we be to defend and propagate it. All depends, as we are forcibly reminded by St. Ignatius in his meditation on the "Two Standards," under which leader we enlist. The one is the standard of Christ, the other the banner of Lucifer; and whosoever does not fight under the one, enlists and combats under the other. Upon this depends where we shall one day stand at the judgment-seat of Christ—at the right or at the left. Happy, indeed, for us, beloved in Christ, if He now reigns royally in our hearts; then, indeed, after the battle of life is ended, if we have lived upon earth as victorious children of the militant Church, we shall be gloriously crowned amid all the celestial inhabitants of the triumphant Church, where for ever and ever Christ will reign as King of a glory which we shall share with Him.—Amen!

THIRD SERMON.

“They offered Him gifts : gold, frankincense, and myrrh.”—Matt. ii, 11.

AFTER the three Magi had first knelt in adoration and paid their homage to the new-born King of kings, they opened their treasures; and, according to Holy Writ, offered Him the gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

At the annual recurrence of this feast, beloved in Christ, the meditation upon its mystery points to three circumstances which principally and powerfully attract our attention, namely: the star, the Infant (to whom it led), the three Magi, and the nature of their offering. Each of these three circumstances has its deep significance; and this year we shall especially consider the gifts of the three Magi, and the nature of their offering.

This consideration, beyond doubt, deserves a particular place, since the feast itself signifies the call of all nations to the Church of Christ.

This call, which is most intimately connected with the salvation of our souls, pre-supposes that we have not only the happiness of being exteriorly called to the true Church of Christ, but that we also, as her faithful children, live truly in the spirit which animates her. But that our lives, as Catholics, may be indeed modeled according to the Church, the character of the gifts must be expressed in our Christian conduct.

I will prove this to-day, and that through the gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh, which symbolize the virtues which we must practise.

O Mary, you who, with the warmest feelings of thanks, accepted the gifts which the three Magi offered to your Divine Child, look graciously upon that which we are resolved to offer to Him.

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, for the greater glory of God!

The general signification of the feast which we celebrate to-day is well known to us, as also its importance for the salvation of our souls, because of our call to the true faith.

Let us, therefore, from the depths of our grateful hearts, pour forth our ardent thanks for this priceless benefit, which has been granted to us in preference to millions and millions; yes, we have been called to the only true and saving faith before those nations whose people, during the long course of centuries, have lived and died in the darkness of error. But let us not forget the warning of the Lord: "From him to whom much has been given much will be required."

And do not let us forget, beloved in Christ, that St. James cries out to us: "You believe: the devil believes, too; but show your faith by your works." Christ assures us: "That the children of the house shall be cast out into extreme darkness."

From this it is evident that we must not only believe, but also live according to the faith; and such a life, I will not conceal from you, must bear the character of sacrifice, as every thing in the whole order of salvation clearly proves.

It was decreed, by the eternal God, that man was to be redeemed and saved; and this by the bitter sacrifice which Jesus, the Incarnate Son of God, offered. His whole life bore the character of sacrifice, and He terminated it by the sacrificial death of the cross.

He offered it already on the eve of His passion, at the Last Supper, in an unbloody manner, to His heavenly Father; and so instituted the Sacrifice of the New Law, which characterizes and includes the entire divine service of Holy Church.

Sacrifice, considered in general, is the highest act of divine worship, as is shown by its usage even among the heathens. So much the more necessary, then, is it, that, in the New Law, divine worship must leave its impress and character in the life of every child of God, in imitation of our Lord and Redeemer, Jesus Christ.

Those whom God has predestined to glory, He has also chosen to become like unto our Lord and Saviour, as we are most expressly assured by the Apostle of the Gentiles.

The character of the life of Jesus was essentially one of sacrifice.

He cries out to all mankind: "He who will follow Me, let him take up his cross and deny himself,"

which signifies that our whole life must be one of self-denial, and, therefore, of constant sacrifice.

It is of the utmost importance, therefore, that we be thoroughly penetrated by this truth. The spirit of the Gospel is arrayed in opposition to that of the world; and the character of the life of a worldling to that of a true Christian.

The character of the worldling is *to enjoy* himself in the fullest sense of the word; to plunge recklessly into pleasures' giddy maze; to satisfy every desire; to accomplish all his projects. This is the creed of the child of the world; while St. Paul, on the contrary, cries out to us, in a far different spirit: "Those who belong to Christ have crucified their flesh with its evil desires."

They are living burnt-offerings of the Lord, and their rule of life may be summed up in the following words: "Lord, I am Thine, with all that I am and I have; all is dedicated and offered for Thy greater glory."

It must be so, and can not be otherwise; for we can serve God only in the spirit of self-denial and self-immolation, since, by the fall of our first parents, the law of the flesh and concupiscence have been firmly implanted in our members in opposition to the law of the Spirit.

Therefore, since all who desire to belong to Christ have to live in this spirit of sacrifice, St. Peter calls the Christians, "A priestly people"; and those who finish their lives in this spirit will one day rejoice in

heaven; for St. John declares: "Thou hast made of us kings and priests."

But if, in the second place, you inquire what are really the most proper and special gifts which, as children of the Church we are bound to offer, they are symbolized by the gifts of the three holy kings.

They offered to the Infant Jesus: gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

I apply these gifts to our understanding, will, and heart, which are dedicated to God, and offered through our faith, as children of the Church, through our hope and our love.

This oblation of the life of a true Christian possesses, indeed, and that in the highest degree, the qualities which characterize a sacrifice in the service of God as an oblation of praise, thanksgiving, and expiation.

I prove this through the following remarks: Man is, according to his nature, *intellect*, *will*, and *heart*.

The intellect is the power of the soul, by which we know the reality of things, and the relation which they bear toward one another. This faculty of the soul man offers to his God and Creator through holy faith; for holy faith places before him the truths which are above his comprehension. He believes them to be true only in consideration of the infallible truth, which is God Himself speaking to us by the mouth of the infallible Church.

He believes these revealed truths, although they contradict the senses, and man should, by force of

intellect, be utterly unable to penetrate them, or to prove them.

This act, therefore, is an oblation of the intellect, and a magnificent and precious oblation it is. It is by faith, among other acts, that we honor God—the genuine coin or test-metal between true and false currency.

The will of man is, according to its nature, free. Naturally its desires tend toward the possession and enjoyment of that which is earthly; but the power of holy hope imparts to it the wish to aim after “the things which are above.” It draws man gently on to the resolution to yield his will to nothing whatsoever which is of “the earth, earthly”; but only to fulfill the will of God, who will reward our obedience and our fidelity with eternal bliss.

This oblation is symbolized by the frankincense, whose sweet odor ascends toward heaven.

Our hearts feel and love, and naturally incline, toward creatures—toward other hearts.

The power of love toward God effects that man loves God above all things,—every thing else he loves only in God and for God; and, that he may one day rejoice in the eternal possession of God, he joyfully resolves, in the fervor of his love, to sacrifice every thing in this world to overcome all difficulties which are an obstacle to the love of God. Yes, in the heat of this love, he desires even to sever the closest and tenderest bonds of friendship and nature.

This oblation is symbolized by myrrh, for no one is able to lead such a life without feeling, in regard to

earthly things, and in the combat of the interior, the bitterness of self-sacrifice.

In this disposition, the faithful, hoping, and loving soul praises and thanks God unceasingly by her life, which is dedicated and immolated to the Lord.

Well may we rejoice if we in truth have a right to declare before Christ, with St. Ignatius:

“Take, O Lord, all my liberty, my intellect, my memory, and my entire will. All that I am and that I have, I have from Thee. I give and offer it all to Thee again. Give me only Thy love and Thy grace, and I am rich enough.”

Such is the gold, the frankincense, and the myrrh of our dedication and oblation to Him, the Triune God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen!

FEAST OF THE MOST HOLY NAME OF JESUS.

FIRST SERMON.

Thou shalt call His name Jesus."—Matt. i.

HOLY Church, as we well know, reminds the faithful of the institution of the most holy Sacrament on Holy Thursday, but, nevertheless, she celebrates a separate feast in its honor, the Feast of Corpus Christi. For she wishes that her children, with undivided affection, look at the most august Sacrament, to pour out their hearts entirely before Christ in adoration, praise, and thanksgiving. This could not be done so perfectly in Holy Week, when the Church, for the most part, is absorbed in the contemplation of the passion of Jesus Christ and His death upon the cross.

The same is true of the feast of to-day.

The reason of it is this : The feast of circumcision, by which we are reminded of the glorious name of Jesus, given on this day to the Infant Saviour, according to divine design and command, is at the same time the festival of New Year's day. Now Holy Church has great reason to fear that, on account of the usual New Year's wishes, visits, and amusements, her children would be too much distracted to devote any attention to the signification of the most holy Name of Jesus, and

of its relation to our spiritual and temporal welfare for time and eternity. Therefore, after New Year she celebrates a special feast in honor of the most holy Name of Jesus.

To-day let us consider the answer to the question: What has the most holy Name of Jesus, in its full signification, to say for our life as children of God?

O Mary, thou who with thy intensest maternal love didst hear and didst pronounce the name of thy divine Child, obtain for us the grace to receive the sanctifying power of this most holy Name upon our lives!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, for the greater glory of God!

To understand the full signification of the most holy Name of Jesus, in its practical relation upon our manner of life as children of God, we need only reflect upon the different names by which Isaias salutes in the spirit of prophecy, the promised Child, the Saviour of the world. He says: "For a Child is born to us, and a Son is given to us; and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, God, the Mighty, the Father of the world to come, the Prince of peace."

Let us separately consider the relations of these different names to the most holy Name of Jesus; they are as so many rays which most brilliantly encircle it, that we may be enabled to fathom its full significance.

First, Isaias designates the coming Saviour of the world by the name: "Wonderful."

This name, beyond doubt, is due to the divine Child Jesus, for it points to the wonder of wonders; namely, the incarnation of the Son of God, and it is precisely in this that we find, above all, the practical bearing of the holy Name of Jesus upon our lives. This name requires of us to think of the affair of our salvation, and to live so that we may happily accomplish it, and be saved through Christ, once to triumph with Him, and through Him forever in heaven.

But that our desire and efforts in this regard may attain a happy result, it is absolutely necessary to struggle and to bear with the trials by which God tries the sincerity of our will in His service.

Again, His name is "Counsellor," as Isaias tells us. This is the second practical relation which the most holy Name of Jesus bears to our lives, and it implies that we must seek counsel of Him in reference to the state of life we are to choose and the manner in which we are to live in it, in imitation of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

If we would become blessed through Jesus Christ, it can be in no other way than through constant efforts to model our lives entirely after His pattern. And as to the particular virtues which we must thoroughly practise in imitation of Christ, in order to follow Jesus, they are pointed out to us in the clearest manner by the circumstances in which the divine Child entered into this world, when the most holy Name "Jesus" was given to Him.

Humbled to the form of a sinful child of man, the Son of God lies in the manger.

He has annihilated himself and taken the form of a servant, says St. Paul.

If we desire that the Name of Jesus should exercise an influence upon our lives, we must, above all, go to Him for good counsel, and humble ourselves before Him as He lies in the manger ; for as God resists the proud, we must root out every fiber of arrogance from our hearts, and endeavor to be among the humble to whom He gives His grace.

Jesus lies in the crib, poor, without possessions, wrapped in swaddling clothes, warmed by the breath of two beasts of burden !

If we wish that the most holy Name of Jesus should exercise an influence upon our lives, then must we seek counsel from the Child in the manger, and learn how to disengage the heart from the love of property and possession.

“Ye can not serve two masters ;” thus has the divine Child already admonished us through the example of the manner of its nativity.

You can not, at the same time, serve God and mammon.

The divine Child lies lonely in the crib, whilst Bethlehem overflows with the strangers who had assembled there.

If the most holy Name of Jesus is to exercise an influence upon the sanctification of our lives and upon the salvation of our souls, then we must seek counsel

from that divine Child, who will tell us that we must avoid that unnecessary, and often dangerous, intercourse with men, who are, for the most part, not filled with the Spirit of God, but filled with the spirit of the world, caring little for their salvation, for eternity, and thinking only of how to live here on earth as happily as possible. Their example and encouragement are often so pernicious that, instead of following Christ in life we allow ourselves to be carried away, and fettered by the yoke of the children of the world, forgetting entirely the obligation of living a holy Catholic life.

In addition to this there are many temptations and dangers into which human respect and the fear of man plunges the Christian, causing frequently that he fears more the displeasure of man than of God.

The Infant Jesus lies in the manger, shivering with the winter's cold upon a bed of straw; and in receiving His holy Name He, for the first time, sheds His precious blood. If we would that this most holy Name should exercise an influence upon our lives, then must we seek counsel of Him, and fully awake to the knowledge that it is impossible, without the spirit of self-denial and self-abnegation, to follow Jesus; for St. Paul declares that all who wish to belong to Christ have crucified their flesh with its lusts; and, "Whosoever would follow Me, let him deny himself, and take upon himself his daily cross," are the words of Christ. This means that we must apply the pruning-knife in earnest, cut off the disorderly desires of our hearts, and

in all our actions go for counsel to Jesus, and imitate His example.

His Name is God. Shall the most holy Name of Jesus exercise an influence upon our lives? Then this life must essentially be one united to God by our walking ever in His presence. It must be a life of intercourse with God in prayer, likewise of intercourse with Jesus in the Most Holy Sacrament, that we may in spirit and in truth enter into an abiding union with God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

His name is "Mighty." But if this life is, indeed, to lead us to our happy destiny and end, we must persevere.

"Whosoever perseveres to the end will be saved."

It is particularly the most holy Name of Jesus which will instill into our hearts this strength through the power it exercises against every species of temptation.

As long as the heart and the mouth call upon this most holy Name, no power of the world, of the flesh, or of hell can prevail against us.

His Name is: "The Father of the world to come."

Do we desire the most holy Name of Jesus to influence our lives, then must we be careful to "seek the things which are above, where Christ abides." Your conduct be like those in heaven, as St. Paul admonishes us. "Sursum Corda." "Lift up your hearts," is the daily admonition of our Holy Church to her children by the lips of the priests at the altar; and can we doubt that a mind fixed on heavenly things is a mark of the children of God?

The child of the world seeks only what is below, and longs for the possession and enjoyment of earthly things.

The child of God is solicitous for that which is to come, for the bliss to be found where dwelleth Jesus, who went before to prepare for us a place in the kingdom of eternal joys.

And how could one lovingly name Jesus, without thinking of that heaven which He has already entered, and where He is awaiting us—He, the Prince of peace, who conquered in the battle, and gained the victory? There is only one impediment in the way of salvation, and that is sin,—for its characteristic is rebellion against God.

Beloved in Christ, whenever this sets in, then departs that peace which the angels announced to men, at the birth of Christ!

Peace with God, peace with ourselves and with all men, through the peace of a conscience free of sin. Behold, then, the full signification of the most holy Name of Jesus, and its practical influence upon our lives as the name of salvation, the only Name under heaven through which we can be saved!—Amen!

SECOND SERMON.

“He gave Him a name which is above every name.”—Phil. ii, 9.

BY the very fact that the Church has instituted a festival devoted to the special honor and glorification of the most holy Name of Jesus, she expressly gives us to understand that she sees a particular means of grace for the sanctification of her children in the veneration of this most holy Name.

This Name is heard daily, and that not once only, but again and again, in our intercourse with God, and is so essentially the Name of salvation that St. Peter, in his first sermon, cried out to his hearers, “There is no other Name given to man in which to be saved than the most holy Name of Jesus.”

And again, when speaking of the Redeemer Christ, St. Paul assures us: “And He, the Father, has given Him a Name which is above all names, so that in the Name of Jesus every knee shall bend in heaven, on earth, and under the earth;” and “every tongue shall confess that Christ has entered into the glory of the Father.”

No doubt, the greater the reverence and devotion we bear towards the most holy Name of Jesus, the more abundant will be our share of all the graces and blessings which are connected with this holy Name. The more brightly the light of faith burns within our hearts, the stronger we shall feel in the service of God, and the greater will be the degree of courage and con-

solation, which fills us as children of God, to accomplish in the strength of this most holy Name the great affair of salvation.

O Mary, Mother of grace, grant that we may ever call upon the most holy Name of thy divine Son in union with the affections of thy heart.

I speak in the holy name of Jesus, for the greater glory of God!

“He gave Him a Name which is exalted above every name,” as St. Paul assures us, and we know full well that it is true. Consider the circumstances which serve to make a name honorable and glorious, and then apply them to the most holy Name of Jesus. The name is the designation of the bearer, and is therefore the reflection of his dignity, rights, qualities, and deeds; and it is for this reason that Holy Scripture values so highly the names of different persons who stand in an especial relation to the kingdom of God.

“What is thy name?” thus asked Moses of the Lord, who spoke to him from out the burning bush, and the answer he received runs thus: “I am—who am.” This is my Name. The one who is the first being, to whom all other beings owe their existence; that one am I. Jehovah is the Name by which the children of Israel are to call Me; hence also the precept: Thou shalt not take the Name of the Lord thy God in vain, but think who it is,—what a being you name, when your lips pronounce the Name of God.

The same is true of men whom God has sent especially for the propagation of His kingdom on earth. God Himself gave to Adam and Eve, our first parents, their names. He called Abraham "Father of the faithful." An angel declared by what name the precursor of Christ should be called, and of Christ Himself the angel asserts: "Thou shalt call his Name Jesus, a Name which is named sooner in heaven than on earth."

So much by way of preface. Let us now consider the various circumstances of the persons who are elevated and made worthy of respect by their names.

The first circumstance which distinguishes a name is that it is an indication of the dignity of the person who bears it. To prove this we need only look around us in every-day life.

Among men there are families distinguished by the rank which belongs to them in the order of society. Such are: count, duke, prince, emperor or king. To the question, What is their name? the answer is indicative of much; and if it be the name of an illustrious noble family, how greatly does it contribute that all the members of that family receive the most deferential and distinguished treatment. What reverence should then penetrate our hearts when we pronounce the most holy Name of Jesus! For who is He that is designated by this name? What is the rank of Him who bears it, in the order of the creatures which God called into existence? I say in answer that the Name of Jesus is the Name of the Incarnate Son of God. It is therefore the Name of the infinite majesty of the Incarnate

Son considered as God, before whom the Seraphim of heaven intone with unceasing adoration the cry, "Holy, holy, holy!"

But it is at the same time the Name of one who, as man, declares: "All power is given to me in heaven and on earth." It is the Name of the one who says: "Through me rule the rulers." It is the Name of the one whom St. John beheld adorned with many diadems, and the loins girded with the inscription: "A King of kings, a Ruler of rulers."

It is at the same time the Name of the King of all the choirs of holy angels, in whose glory we view the prerogatives of those choirs royally glorified. It is the Name of the King of all saints according to their choirs, whose pre-eminence we also behold royally glorified in Him.

I repeat, what reverence, therefore, should fill our hearts when we pronounce this most holy Name!

Besides descent or origin, the name indicates possession and power. The greater and more ancient a kingdom is, the more subjects it numbers, the richer and the more fruitful it is, the more majestical and glorious sounds the name of the ruler who governs it as king.

How different is the respect paid to the name which merely indicates the ruler of some petty principedom, from the homage elicited by the name of an emperor over whose dominions the sun neither rises nor sets at once, because it extends over the entire earth, as was the case with the Emperor Charles V. But, nevertheless, how insignificant appear all the empires of

this world in comparison with the kingdom of Christ, which began with the probation of the angels, and comprises heaven and earth, the visible and invisible world.

And what shall we say of the multitude of subjects which it contains? On earth all the nations which, by their faith and their hope in Christ, have entered His Church, in heaven all the myriads of angels according to their choirs, acknowledge its sway.

In regard to the power of His kingdom, it is sure of victory and immovable through Him who confesses of Himself: "The power given to me by my Father is greater than all I have conquered."

What invests a name with splendor, are the talents, the noble deeds, the battles, the conquests of the one who bears it; wherefore the names of great and learned men, artists, authors, heroes, and conquerors are still illustrious even after the lapse of many centuries.

Let us apply all this to the magnificence of the most holy Name of Jesus. It is the Name of Him who said of Himself: "Here is more than Solomon." It is the Name of Him whom Holy Scripture calls the Lord of science; and how many and what great things has this Name already effected on earth!

What would be our life on this earth if the most sweet Name of Jesus had remained obscure and unknown to us? It would be a life of darkness and ignorance in matters of salvation; a life of moral debility; a life of slavery to our predominant passion; a life of disgrace, fettered by the chains of sin; a life without

consolation in sufferings, and full of despair for all eternity.

But now there is for all who are of good will and call upon and confess this Name, light, strength, courage, and consolation in the Lord ; and as yet, all has not been revealed of the kingdom of glory, the power and unction into which this most holy Name will lead us. All these are rays of glory, which exalt this sweet and consoling, this holy and sanctifying Name.

Thirdly, what glorifies a name, are the virtues which adorn the character of the one it designates.

Oh, what a holy Name is the name of Jesus ! It is the Name of the Incarnate sanctity. It is the Name of the Redeemer of humanity, and the fruits of the Redemption, the holy Sacraments, every prayer we utter, and the merits of every good work we perform, are all imparted to man through the power and unction of this Name.

“Whatsoever you shall ask the Father in my Name, He will give to you.” So we are assured by Jesus himself. This Name is the seal which renders our works meritorious for heaven, if we perform them in imitation of the Lord, according to His most holy will and with the assistance of His grace.

Whatsoever has in this regard been performed of good and meritorious works for heaven or for the glorification of God, throughout all ages, and will yet be done to the end of the world in the kingdom of grace, are rays of the glory which surrounds the most holy Name of Jesus.

But, more than all, what rays of consolation does this Name send into our hearts when God visits us with trials and proves us by sufferings! Therefore when, on the day of Judgment, the cross shall shine in all its solemn grandeur in the firmament, how great will then be the glory which will irradiate the most holy Name of Jesus when all heaven will give honor to the Triune God as Creator and Redeemer, in the Name of Jesus, in adoration and thankfulness, for ever and ever!—Amen!

THIRD SERMON.

“Thy name is like oil poured out.”—Cant. i.

THE Church celebrates a special festival for the glorification of the sacred Name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. This is salutary and right, for it is the Name of the Redeemer of the world; and, therefore, with regard to its relation to Him who bears it, and to the work He accomplished, it is a most solemn, mighty, holy, sanctifying, sweet and consoling Name. But the most important point in its consideration is that it exercises a powerful influence upon our lives as children of God and His Holy Church.

But, to denote more clearly the person of the Redeemer, and what He accomplished by the institution of His Church, we add, according to the direction of Holy Scripture, to this Name still another, namely, Christ. We should frequently think of the significance of this Name and its relation to us; for after it we are called, in imitation of Christ, and as members of His Church, Christians. It can be said of this holy Name, as well as of the name Jesus, that it is a most holy, solemn, mighty, sanctifying, and consoling Name, admirably qualified to exercise an influence upon our lives, that we may not only call ourselves disciples of Jesus and of His Church, but also live as such.

I will, therefore, speak to-day of the dignity of the

Name to be called a Christian, and of the influence which that Name should exercise upon our lives.

O Mary, help of Christians, protectress of the Catholic Church, assist us, that we may not merely be called Christians, but may also live as such!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, for the greater glory of God!

As we read the acts of the martyrs, we see that, at the time of the persecution of Diocletian, Christians, in the bright light of day, walked in the public streets having plates on their foreheads, on which were inscribed the words: "I am a Christian."

This confession was to remind the persecutors of the Church how useless it was to induce the faithful—who knew what the name Christian signified, and what relation it bore to the name of Christ Himself—to apostatize from the true faith.

To understand this more clearly, we need only first think of the glorification which is due to the Name of Jesus; and consider how all the circumstances, which elevate it to such a dignity, and surround it with the light of glory, refer also in manner and degree to the name "Christian," which we bear as children of His Church.

I say, first, the Name of Jesus is a most solemn Name, which, as the angel said to St. Joseph, was sooner named in heaven than on earth. It is the Name of the Incarnate Son of God.

The name Christian is also a name which was sooner named in heaven than it was bestowed upon man on earth. There was indeed no necessity that we should receive the happiness of being children of the true Church of Christ. For this great privilege we are indebted to the decree of the love and mercy of God, who, from all eternity, ordained that we should be born of Catholic parents; or else, enlightened and encouraged by the assistance of God, receive grace to become children of the Holy Church. We shall the better estimate this happiness, if we think of the multitude of men throughout the world who lived before Christ, are now living, and will yet live in the future, without ever attaining it.

Yes, a precious, a glorious and gracious name is the name of Christian.

The name Jesus is the Name of the Son of God, who became Man for us, and the name Christian is that of the children of God; it was imparted to us at baptism, through which we were regenerated, as children of the Church, and, at the same time, as children of our Father in heaven.

The name of Jesus is glorious, through the properties of the person and dignity of Christ and His kingdom. All these circumstances are so many rays which glorify the name of "Christian" before the face of heaven and earth.

The name Christian indicates an extremely high and glorious position, which we maintain among the creatures of God; for, as Christians, we are changed from

children and slaves of Satan into children of God,—citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem,—fellow-citizens of the angels, and brothers and sisters of the saints. We are permitted to call Mary, the Queen of heaven, our Mother; and Jesus, who sits at the right hand of His Father, our Brother. Through baptism, by which the name “Christian” is imparted to us, we enter into the visible kingdom of Christ upon earth; enjoy, with Holy Church, her victories and triumphs, and attain to the possession of the infinite merits of our Lord and Redeemer Jesus Christ, who deposits them in the treasury of the Church,—yes, we even attain to the personal possession of Christ Himself, in the most august Sacrament of the Altar.

The happiness of being a Christian gives us, at the same time, the right to become heirs of heaven, and one day to enter into it, body and soul, to dwell forever there. Not only this; but this Name, if we live accordingly, gives us power to elevate our thrones in heaven always higher and higher, by the good works which we perform on earth in the state of grace, and to gather always more and more treasures, and so become richer and richer for eternity.

What a great happiness to be a Christian!

But, in order to reign one day royally with Christ in the strength of His Name, we must certainly do something on our part. We must lawfully combat against the powers of darkness, which endeavor to seduce us to deviate from the narrow path of salvation, and walk on the broad and pleasant road of eternal perdition.

In this regard, we must be zealous in overcoming temptation; we must avoid sin, and, with the zeal of the saints, perform good works.

But the name Christian reminds us, furthermore, of a series of motives which, if we consider them properly, will inspire us with courage and strength to conquer in this manner victoriously, and to crush the head of the serpent of temptation, thus coming nearer and nearer each day to that perfection at which we all must aim.

I am a Christian, how could I, by sinning, sacrifice the dignity of having been created in the image of God, and every right and title to the triumphant kingdom of Christ in heaven? Never! ah, never! I am a Christian; and as long as I possess within my heart the power to feel, I will utter the triumphant cry: "Depart from me!" and endeavor, by my progress in the path of perfection, to remain close to Christ, and to become always more like unto Him, that He may not be ashamed to call me His brother before all the radiant angels of His heavenly realm.

The Name of Jesus is a holy and sanctifying Name, so also is the name of Christian. It was imparted to us in baptism, whose saving waters cleanse every stain of sin from the soul, and infuse into it the priceless boon of sanctifying grace.

As true Christians we shine, as St. Paul assures us, like bright and sparkling torches amid the darkness, which, through idolatry, sins, and crimes of every kind, bury and enchain the nations of the earth.

“Let your light shine, that men may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.” These are the words of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. How earnestly, therefore, should not the consciousness—“I am a Christian”—urge us to the imitation of Christ, and to the utmost solicitude in the momentous affair of our salvation. A martyr of Christ who, in the early ages of Christianity, was dragged before the judge because he was a Christian, gave to all the questions of the pagan judge the unvarying answer: “I am a Christian.” What is your name? “I am a Christian.” What is your occupation? “To be a Christian.”

If I can thus reply with truth, then indeed my salvation is secured; if not, then indeed I am in danger. Ah, yes! a Christian I am, and will ever be! The Name of Jesus is a Name which is full of the sweetest consolation and celestial benediction; so also is the name Christian. It whispers to us to look into the mystery of the Redemption of the world,—the passion and death of our Lord and Redeemer Jesus Christ.

Instructed by Christ's word, encouraged by His example to bear the cross, all troubles lose the appearance of evil, and shine with a lovely light along the way to heaven to increase our joy in the kingdom of eternal reward, if we, with Him, for Him, and through Him, have victoriously endured the trials which He has sent us here on earth.

It was this that amazed the heathens, and was so

often the means of winning them to confess the truth of our holy faith. What admiration filled them when they beheld how Christians, in the midst of torments, praised and thanked God that He deemed them worthy to testify in this manner their love to Him, and their fidelity to the faith He came to teach. "I am a Christian." This one thought is a blessed source of consolation. Oh, what joy in the remembrance that we are in possession of a dignity the very name of which is a pledge of security for us for time and eternity!

Well is it for us if, through constant meditation on the above, a true appreciation of this dignity penetrates us. Thus we shall, after a joyfully happy and meritorious life, receive, upon our dying bed, that consolation which St. Teresa experienced when she yielded her pure soul into the hands of the Lord: "I die as a child of the Holy Catholic Church." Amen!

FEAST OF THE PURIFICATION.

FIRST SERMON.

“Now Thou dost dismiss Thy servant, O Lord, in peace!”—Luke 2.

THESE were the words of holy Simeon as he received the divine Child from the arms of its mother; who would not congratulate him that the Lord fulfilled his ardent longing, and that, too, in so perfect a manner, by look upon the Infant God?

To behold the promised Redeemer, and then depart from this world to his eternal home, had been the suppliant prayer of Simeon from the days of his youth to his venerable old age; and this silent but intense desire of his heart was gratified on the Feast of the Purification, which we celebrate to-day.

Mary, with the divine Child in her arms, entered the temple with Joseph, her virginal spouse. Simeon looked upon the Child and, the Holy Spirit illuminating his soul, recognized in Him the Saviour of the world; and not only that, but he glanced with prophetic vision into the future, and God permitted him to behold the consequences of His advent into the world,—the Church so gloriously founded by Him. He thanked God for the happiness and grace when he saw himself among the number of those for whom

Christ was to become a sign of resurrection and glorification for eternal life.

The Lord granted his ardent desire, and surely in a more perfect manner than he anticipated, from which arose his prayer: "Now, O Lord, dismiss Thy servant in peace!"

The example of Simeon indicates, in the most explicit manner, what is required that we may also bid adieu to life, consoled and strengthened in the Lord.

O Mary, sweet consoler of the dying, obtain for us the grace of a happy death!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, for the greater honor of God!

Simeon longed to depart from this world. Unlike so many, even among those who have received the light of faith, death held nothing terrible for him. Why is it, beloved in Christ, that the approach of death is generally regarded with such apprehension, and even terror?

Because the human heart is entirely too much engrossed by the things of this world—its goods and treasures. Men toil on as long as their energies will permit, to acquire what they deem a sufficient competency to enable them to spend their declining years in comfort, ease, or luxury; and when the grim monarch of the tomb bids them leave it all, their whole interior undergoes a fearful struggle. Men pass their lives in enjoyment, they are happy in the love and af-

fection of the family circle, or their days pass on in dissipation and forbidden amusements, when suddenly death appears and bids them go. Ah! then what trouble, what misery, what resistance on the part of those whose prayer is *not*: "Now, O Lord, dismiss Thy servant in peace;" but a very different one: "Now, O Lord, let Thy creature enjoy the goods of earth, and grant unto me still many days with my family, relations, and friends. Ah! let me taste still longer the joys of earth."

Simeon longed for death; not so the child of the world. Simeon held the Child Jesus in his arms, and pressed Him to his heart, hoping ere long to embrace Him in the kingdom of His eternal love; which circumstance refers to another fact, from which we learn the reason why every Christian does not long to be dissolved, and to be with Christ.

Man, indeed, believes in Christ, adores Him, and is resolved to live as a child of His Holy Church, but by all this he does not attain to the personal knowledge of the Lord, whom he loves, so to say only in name. Hence the weakness of his love, and desire, and longing for God.

We are satisfied to live in His grace, but Jesus is not the principal thought, the principal wish, the principal desire of our hearts. Man lives near Him, but in spirit he is more engrossed with other men and objects than with God, and all that concerns His empire.

Therefore, he does not feel the ardent longing to

leave this world, to haste to his Creator, and to abide with Him in the full possession of His superabundant love, and to sigh with St. Paul: "I desire to be dissolved, and to be with Christ."

How very different would this be did we but follow the admonition contained in the example of the venerable Simeon, holding in his arms the Infant Saviour. This should remind us of the presence of Christ in the Most Holy Sacrament, and of the happiness of being permitted to have intercourse with Him therein. It should remind us of the great privilege we enjoy of speaking to Him, of laying before Him each wish of our hearts, and even of receiving His precious Body and Blood,—a happiness which was not granted to Simeon.

Indeed, generally speaking, what Christ was to do for us, was not so well known to him as to us. While Christ has already lived and accomplished the work of redemption in us, Simeon enjoyed but for a few moments the opportunity of remaining with Him in person; for Mary and Joseph left the temple, and took the little Infant away. But now, Christ abides among us in the tabernacle, and never for a moment ceases to invite and entreat us to come to Him. Oh, that we might fully comprehend how to appreciate and make use of this immeasurably great gift!—this gift of the perpetual presence of the Lord in the Blessed Sacrament! Only through the perfect application of this precious gift will the meaning of all the relations of Christ become clear to us. When we call Him

our Father—Brother—Friend—the Spouse of our souls, we begin to anticipate what our hearts will feel for Him when we behold Him unveiled—freed from the sacramental forms—when we look upon His glory in heaven, and embrace Him there.

In the measure that the personal love and knowledge of Jesus Christ increases in us by our intercourse with Him, in the same degree the desire grows evermore intense to fly to Him from this world of sin to a home of eternal bliss. For what would be the possession of the whole earth, with its riches and its pleasures, compared to that possession into which we enter, if we depart this life in the grace of God, and hear from His divine lips the blessed words: “Enter into the joys, the glory, and the delights of thy Lord.” “The conqueror I let sit with Me on My throne.” Oh, what are all the fleeting honors of this world compared with the brilliant luster of the crown which Christ will put upon our heads, when we shall have reached the refuge of His love in heaven! and what are earthly joys compared to those which He has prepared for His own, beyond the skies!

We may, it is true, enjoy the delights of the happy family circle—our parents, children, friends—and it will be a bitter pang to part with them by death; but the pain of that separation will be repaid a thousand fold by the bliss which a union with Christ in heaven will bring to us. Through Him we enter into the communion and beatitude of the saints, of His blessed mother, St. Joseph, and all the celestial host. Ah!

then, may we not indeed, with the holy Simeon, and the venerable Apostle of nations, desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ?

One circumstance which intensifies that desire is this: What a joy it will be to leave the world, and with it the many, the innumerable offenses by which in every hour of the day and night Jesus Christ is insulted and crucified anew, even by those who call themselves children of His Church!

And we, ourselves, alas! are not free from reproach in this regard; for we offend Him, if not by mortal sins, at least by innumerable venial faults and imperfections, from which we can not keep ourselves free without a special grace of God. What a motive to desire heaven, and to sigh from the deepest depths of the heart: "I long to be dissolved, and to be with Christ;" where I will be confirmed in grace, and forever free from the fear of displeasing my Lord and God; where I will be purified from every stain of sin, and will become an object of His pleasure and love for all eternity.

The holy Simeon was endowed with the spirit of prophecy. He penetrated the secrets of the ages yet hidden in the mystic veil of futurity; and the destinies of the Church were revealed to him. He beheld the combat which the Church of Christ would have to enter upon, and the different manner in which the children of men would apply or reject the priceless gift of redemption.

When Simeon held the Infant Jesus in his arms, the

massive gates of heaven were yet closed, and his soul must descend to Limbo, and wait until Christ would enter His kingdom of glory, and take with Him the souls saved through His passion and death.

Look in spirit upon your own dying bed. How different will it be! Christ has entered His kingdom, and there awaits the just soul with a heavenly crown. Now, if during life, our whole desire was to be with Him, a desire which displayed itself by our aspiration after the perfection and fidelity of the saints in imitating Him, then we will, after death, fly immediately to Him, and enter into His beatitude and love. God grant to us all, beloved in the Lord Jesus, through the intercession of the blessed Virgin, St. Joseph, and St. Anna, the grace of a happy death, full of an ardent longing after Christ, our dearest Saviour!—Amen!

SECOND SERMON.

“A light to the revelation of the Gentiles.”—Luke 2.

THE feast which Holy Church celebrates to-day in honor of the Blessed Virgin has a twofold name. It is called the Feast of the Purification of the Blessed Virgin. This name relates to the historical event, which took place when Mary presented herself in the temple, with the divine Child, that she might there fulfill the precept of a law which, properly speaking, did not regard her in the least.

The name “Candlemas Day” refers to the rite of blessing the candles to be used by the faithful, which is observed with proper solemnity by the Church. In regard to these blessed candles, there are three special periods of life when the Church places those candles, enriched by her benediction, in the hands of her children, and these are: First, at their entrance into this world—when they receive the sacrament of baptism; secondly, when, for the first time, they approach the altar, and from the hands of God’s minister receive the Body and Blood of Christ; and, thirdly, when, at the close of life, the soul is about to go forth and meet the Judge of the living and the dead.

Let us consider to-day what relation the lighted blessed candle bears to our conduct as children of God in imitating Christ, at the baptismal font, at first holy communion, and at the bed of death.

O Mary, who becamest, through Christ, a light to guide mankind, obtain for us the light of grace clearly to discern our vocation as children of God, and to walk therein with unfaltering steps!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, for the greater glory of God!

Our Holy Mother Church places a lighted blessed candle in the hands of each one of her children, first, when they enter this world,—or, to speak with more exactness, on their entrance into the visible kingdom of Jesus Christ by the sacrament of baptism. Her intention in doing this is shown by the words which the priest, in her name, directs to the newly baptized infant: “Receive this burning light, and keep thy baptism so as to be without blame. Observe the commandments of God, that when our Lord shall come to His nuptials, thou mayest meet Him, together with all the saints, in the heavenly court, and mayest have life everlasting, and live forever and ever.—Amen!”

What an admonition is contained in these words! Preserve pure and unspotted your baptismal robe; preserve the remembrance of the promises made by you; forget not your baptismal vows; observe all that you have so solemnly taken upon yourselves before the Lord. As Christians, you have renounced the devil with all his works and pomps; try, then, ever to live as true servants of Christ. And what is meant by a truly Christian life? Beloved in Christ,

one glance at Him, who is the Light of the world, will teach us this.

Man, left to himself, knows but little of all that regards his ultimate destiny and last end; he can not realize the malice and horror of sin, for his spirit is shrouded in dark night, and he dwelleth in the shadow of death.

But let him become well instructed in the truths of faith; let him look at Christ, the Light of the world, and consider what He,—through His word and example, from the moment of His advent into the world, through His life and death upon the cross,—teaches us by His Church.

Christ, the Son of God, assumes our flesh to free us from the evil of sin, which quenches in us the light of grace.

Besides this, we learn from the lips of the prophets—from Christ Himself, through the teachings of the Apostles and their successors—that all are saved who here in the state of grace participate in the fruits of the Redemption.

We are clearly instructed in all that is calculated to fill our hearts with hatred and horror of sin; we are told what we must do in order to be cleansed from it, if, after baptism, we have had the misfortune to offend God thereby, and fall once more into the power of Satan.

The Christian who, in this regard, permits himself to be thoroughly illuminated by the light of faith which Christ brought into this world, will become also

thoroughly in earnest in his resolution to amend his life. "*No more sin!*" Such a one avoids the occasion of sin; yes, in the first moment of temptation, he cries out against Satan, in the most holy name of Jesus, "Depart," and thus conquers the tempter, which, through his knowledge of Christ, and the study of His divine example and doctrines, but, above all, through his ardent love, he can easily accomplish.

If this be so, what then is the reason that so very few retain their baptismal innocence, and that by far the greater number lose it so soon? I answer by saying that it is because we forget to glance at Christ, Who, through sin, was crucified for us.

The second occasion on which the Church presents her children with a blessed candle, is on the occasion of their first communion. She admonishes them by this not to be satisfied merely to avoid sin, but with unwavering footsteps to walk after Christ in the way of Christian perfection. He is the brilliant Light which makes of this darksome earth a glorious way to heaven.

In our lives as true children of the Church we must strive ever to know, in as distinct a manner as possible, the most holy will of God, and pray always for the strength and will to fulfill it perfectly. And what is, in general, the will of God in our regard? To this question St. Paul replies: "This is the will of God: your sanctification." Through what? This question also the great Apostle of nations answers with equal certainty: "Those also whom He has elected,

He has predestined to become conformable to Himself;" and he says of himself: "Be ye my imitators, as I am an imitator of Christ," and each true Christian should be enabled to say the same to the rest of mankind. But, alas, what darkness envelops that portion of the human race who know nothing of Christ; while the halo, as it were, of a brilliant sunlight encircles those who look at His bright example and obey His admonition: "Learn of Me;" and again: "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice."

To what heights of perfection can those Christians attain who glance at Christ and imitate His example! This we may learn by the lives of the saints; and, as this symbolical light sparkles in our hand at Holy Communion, Mother Church points at the same time to the source of all grace by which we are enabled to live in the imitation of Christ after the manner of the saints.

This, beloved in the Lord Jesus, is our intercourse with Christ in the most Holy Sacrament, which is the only way to attain, to His personal knowledge, to the perfect love of Jesus Christ, and to follow His example until we attain to the highest degree of virtue.

If the illuminative light—as it shines through Christ into the hearts of the innocent ones, who are united with Him for the first time through a worthy communion—is never permitted to burn dimly; but, by frequent reception of the Holy Eucharist, is always enlivened anew, then indeed there is an unequivocal assurance that the fervor which characterized their first Holy Communion remains ever the same, and

that their endeavors after Christian perfection in following the Lord will be crowned with success.

The third period of life when the Church places the blessed candle in the hands of her children, is at the moment when the soul is about to leave the body, and its flickering beams cast their uncertain light on the pallid countenance and fading eyes of the dying Christian.

If we would that our zeal should grow constantly greater, and our fervor increase as children of light, let us keep ever in view the remembrance of the powerful word—*Eternity*—united with the abiding thought of the certainty of death and its approach, which comes nearer each moment. It is, as the Apostle styles it, the answer of death within us.

Happy for us, my dearest Christians, if this three-fold relation of the blessed candle burns with ever-increasing brightness around our spirits, for then indeed Christ will surely remain for us the Light to guide our steps to the empire of His glory! Amen!

THIRD SERMON.

“And after the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were accomplished, they carried Him to Jerusalem.”—Luke ii, 22.

“**H**E has regarded the humility of His handmaid.” The Blessed Virgin declares this of herself, and the feast we celebrate to-day is a most glorious proof of this disposition of her heart.

The law of Moses, to comply with which Mary came to the temple to present her offerings, surely related only to mothers who, after the fall of our first mother, Eve, conceived and brought forth a male child in the natural way. It was not thus that Mary conceived her divine Child, but by the power of the Holy Ghost, and she remained a pure virgin before, in, and after His birth. Therefore, although the law of Moses was not binding upon her in regard to this point, nevertheless she fulfilled it, and placed herself by her own free will upon an equality with all the mothers of her race.

This trait in the holy Virgin's character contains a most important lesson for all the children of the Church, reminding us of the zeal, magnanimity, and fidelity with which we should observe the precepts which she has enjoined upon us, and of the spirit of self-sacrifice with which we should be ready to support them at every cost, and thus show before God and the world that we are really His faithful children. If to remind the faithful of this duty was always appropriate and important, it is particularly so nowadays when the Church is in

so remarkable a manner an object of hate to the enemies of Christ, and an object of indifference to so many who call themselves members of her fold.

I call out to all, therefore, to-day: Show yourselves children of God by zealously fulfilling your duties towards His Church, your Mother in Christ.

O Mary, Protectress of the Church, whom we call our Mother, intercede for us that we may ever live according to her commands!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, for the greater honor and glory of God!

“By this it will be known that you are my own,” says Christ, “if you love one another.” *This* is the characteristic mark by which true Catholics are known—*this* spirit of love, which knows nothing of envy or malice, nothing of hatred or enmity, but which disposes our hearts to fulfill literally the counsel of the Lord: “As you would that men should do unto you, do you also to them in like manner.”

None but a true Christian is able to live as he is bound to do by the precept of fraternal love; and we might with equal justice assert that by this it will be known that you are not Catholics in name alone, if you try ever to act in accordance with it.

If you love the Church in proportion to her merits, appreciate her and contribute to her support according to your means.

Let us briefly consider the many and powerful rea-

sons which place themselves before our eyes in proof of the correctness of the above.

I said—first, “Honor the Church, whose protectress is, Mary, as your mother.”

Alas! there are many Catholics who perhaps during the whole course of their lives have scarcely given a thought to the great happiness and honor it is for them to call the Catholic Church their mother. They consider not those rare privileges through which the Lord placed her on the lofty mount, that she may be to all who are interested in the salvation of their souls a beacon light.

In regard to those other sects whose members profess to belong to the Church of Christ, they are only the work of men, and the foundation upon which they rest is falsehood and deceit. They teach not the way of truth, but of error. What a contrast to all this is presented by the Church of Christ—the Church of the Triune God, the kingdom of His Incarnate Son! As soon as we enter her fold we are no longer slaves of Satan; we are free; we are God’s own children, entitled to call Him Father, Jesus our Brother, Mary our Mother, the angels and saints our brothers and sisters in Christ. She is the Church with whom Christ deposited the source of every grace, to whom He bequeathed His precious Body and Blood—Himself—in the Most Holy Sacrament. She it is who extends her protecting hand during the whole course of our lives, and who, furthermore, watches over us at the hour of our death. It is her assistance which follows us even when

we have crossed over to the "eternal shore;" and it is she who continually sends her children to heaven, there to increase the glory of the saints.

Although persecuted for centuries, she still stands firm and victorious here on earth, as the immutable kingdom of God.

Her well-instructed children, therefore, filled with holy enthusiasm, should esteem it the greatest honor to be members of this glorious Church, and never for one moment give way to a feeling of shame on professing their faith before the world.

This disposition of the heart must particularly prove itself not only by our observance of the commands of God, and the precepts of the Church, but by endeavoring to induce others to do the same, to obey these commands.

Alas! that we so often hear the excuse even from Catholics—"Oh! that is only a precept of the Church." Foolish and sinful words! Is there not sufficient reason for obedience in the very fact that it *is* a precept of that Church of which Christ says: "Whatsoever you bind upon earth is bound also in heaven;" and again: "He that does not hear the Church, let him be to thee as the heathen." Some, indeed, may even think that obedience to this or that precept is not of so much weight or importance because we are citizens of this great and free republic. What utter folly! How can the country excuse the violation of the precepts of the Church of God? Or, think you that for America there is another church, another heaven, another God?

Besides this, the Church wishes, when she issues her precepts to her children, to afford them occasion to practise the two principal virtues—obedience and self-denial—confirm themselves in them, and give them at the same time occasion to acquire the merit of thus confessing their faith openly before God and man.

We may also apply to the Church what Christ declares of Himself as Judge of the living and the dead: “Whosoever confesses Me before men, the Son of man will also confess him before His Father, who is in heaven.” In like manner can the Church cry out to her children,—“Whosoever confesses Me on earth as his Church and Mother, him will I also acknowledge on the day of judgment.”

What tends to confirm us still more in this resolution to impress on our lives this seal of election for the kingdom of God, is the consideration of how noble, how salutary, and how admirable is all that the Church requires of her members in these precepts, the observance of two among which, characterize us as faithful Catholics. For instance, we are commanded to abstain from flesh meat on Fridays, and to keep holy Sundays and holy days of obligation. By the former we are reminded of the bitter and agonizing death which the Redeemer of the world suffered for us in the flesh on Good Friday. By the latter we are bound to hear Mass on certain special days; although, indeed, even without a precept, good Catholics should and will always avail themselves of the

happiness to be derived from devoutly assisting at the sacrifice of the New Law.

Through this twofold precept the Church proves herself a Mother over the entire world, and reminds us that all men are alike before God. The rich man and the beggar, the serf and the king—we are all children of the one great family of the Lord.

The family roof and the general table are characteristics of the family tie. The one common table which the Church offers to her children on Fridays, and the roof of God's temple, which is always ready to offer them shelter, most appropriately suggest the idea that they are all united in the family of God on earth.

But some one may object and say: "Why refrain from eating *meat*? Why not, just as well, select some other food?" I reply, the Church commands us to abstain from *meat*; she might have obliged us all to *eat meat* on certain days; and in either case it would be to test our obedience, and our compliance would be equally meritorious.

And since those whom it has pleased God to place among His beloved poor are often without the means of procuring meat, it is well for the rich to sit, as it were, at the table of the poor—yes, even the king or emperor—for at least one day of the week. Oh, how replete with wisdom is this admirable precept!

The observance of the festivals, too, reminds us of the vast and important difference between Christians, as we in reality are, and those who are contented with the name! There is no doubt that Protestants pray

on Sundays ; but on festivals, especially those in honor of the saints, they work as heathens ; for they have no saints to produce, and, like the Jews, they are satisfied with their Sabbath rest. Nay, they evince even *less* gratitude to God for the principal events in the life of our Saviour than do the Jews in remembrance of the graces they received from the providence of God in olden times.

In regard to the precept of confession and Holy Communion, all who are deeply penetrated with the spirit of obedience to the Church, will feel the benefit of them without a special law to force them to comply with their duty in these respects. If we truly love our Holy Church, that love will in itself be an impulse which will lead us to support her according to our ability, not only in our own homes, but over the world, with generosity and liberality ; working in all possible ways that every human soul may confess the one God, the Father in heaven, and, on earth, the one Mother, the one Holy Roman Catholic Church.—Amen !

FEAST OF ST. JOSEPH.

FIRST SERMON.

“There was not found the like to Him.”—Ecc. 44.

“**O**UT of many hearts thoughts shall be revealed,” thus spoke Simeon in the temple to Mary, the mother of the divine Child.

Nineteen centuries have passed away since that hour, and how wonderfully have the predictions of Simeon and that of Mary herself, which she so solemnly made from Jerusalem’s height, been verified.

“Henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.”

Every Catholic heart feels, in the love and devotion of a child of God, the most tender veneration to Mary, and a confidence which has never yet been disappointed; and the same is true of the holy father St. Joseph, who, with Mary, the mother of the divine Child, presented himself before Simeon. To Joseph, also, Simeon could direct those words: “But on you, also, the hearts of men shall be revealed.”

It is true that the faithful experience, in regard to the different saints, different sentiments of love and devotion, and have for this or that saint a greater veneration, or a greater confidence in his power.

There is, however, one saint, of whom it can be as-

served, that the entire body of the faithful unite in entertaining a particular veneration for him, and that saint is the great St. Joseph.

To prove the truth of this, you may ask your own hearts : “Do you not feel a special reverence for St. Joseph? and do you not cherish the utmost confidence in his intercession?” There can be but one answer, and that is, *yes*; but still I doubt whether you have considered and reflected upon the justice of the reasons which prove that St. Joseph is not only a great and mighty saint, but that his intercession is, after that of Mary, the most powerful in heaven.

Let me place clearly before your eyes to-day that this is the case.

St. Joseph, after Mary, the greatest of all the saints, raised highest in Heaven, next to Mary, will be the theme of my sermon for his feast to-day.

O Mary, bless the words which issue from my lips for the glorification of your virginal spouse, the great St. Joseph!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, for the greater glory of God!

I say: Honor St. Joseph more than any one of the other saints; for he is not only a great saint, but he is also, next to Mary, the holiest of them all, and, therefore, his intercession is the most powerful.

Certainly it is not becoming for us, as St. Alphonsus Liguori, with other doctors of the Church, admon-

ishes us, to attempt to estimate the greatness of the saints, according to our own pleasure and predilection, and in this way maintain a preference for one above the other. There can be saints, who, beyond a doubt, exteriorly accomplished many more astonishing and glorious deeds ; but God sees the heart of His unknown servants, and what they accomplished before Him will not be known by the world till the day of judgment, which will reveal it all.

However, as the same St. Alphonsus and other equally unquestionable authorities teach, we may, in regard to the holy Apostles, assert without hesitation that they are elevated in heaven above all the choirs of saints, nearest to Christ.

The reason of this assertion lies in the position which they held upon earth in the kingdom of God.

For what determines the degree of our future glorification in heaven ? First, the degree of election, which was bestowed upon us on earth in the kingdom of God ; secondly, the measure of grace, corresponding to this calling ; thirdly, the zeal and fidelity with which we made use of them.

Let us apply what I have said to St. Joseph.

Christ spent an entire night in prayer, and selected twelve from among the whole human race to be with Him. These twelve formed His Apostolic Court. And as Christ departed this world, He directed to them these words : " As My Father has sent Me, I also send you. Whosoever hears you, hears Me. Whosoever honors you, honors Me. Go forth into

the whole world, and preach the gospel to all nations. Whatsoever you bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever you shall loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven. I have elected you." By these words Christ refers to the most glorious calling of the Apostles in the kingdom of Christ upon earth,—a calling which elevated the Apostles above all the rest of the human race, and by which undoubtedly they will be forever distinguished in heaven by the most resplendent glory.

"You will sit with Me on twelve thrones;" thus Christ Himself assures us.

But however glorious was the calling of the Apostles in comparison to that of other men, how immeasurably higher still was that of St. Joseph!

Joseph, by the side of Christ here on earth, was to represent the place of the heavenly Father, as the foster-father of Jesus, the virginal spouse and husband of the Mother of Jesus Christ, the Queen of heaven and earth.

He stood in this relation already at the manger, when Jesus entered into the world, and remained not only three years, as the Apostles did, by His side, but during nearly thirty years.

The Apostles walked with Christ, surrounded by a multitude of people; Jesus seldom spoke to any one of them. Joseph abode with Jesus alone, and conversed with Him at pleasure at any time, as his foster-father was entitled to do.

Christ confided to the Apostles the establishment of

His Church. To St. Joseph was assigned the care of Him who is the Founder of that Church.

In this position, as the foster-father of Christ, it was fitting that St. Joseph should lead so holy a life that, according to the common family life, it might, could such a thing have been possible, have served as a model even for the Child Jesus Himself.

St. Joseph had to lead such a life of perfection that Christ, as the foster-Son, could not but feel obliged to honor it with child-like reverence.

Such was not the case with the Apostles. They were frail men, whom Christ found it sometimes necessary to reprove; where, as any thing like this, can never be thought of in regard of St. Joseph.

Therefore, St. Joseph must surely have so lived that no shadow of imperfection ever fell upon him; yes, so as to leave not the slightest reason for us to think that Jesus could ever have evinced the least desire to say: "This or that man would have been more worthy than you to be My foster-father." No; the testimony which Holy Scripture gave to St. Joseph, "He was a just man," literally proves itself. He was holy, and no other saint ever attained to as great a degree of sanctity.

The same is consequently true of his relations with Mary. The man is the head of the family, and should, therefore, in his situation, live, so as to be a pattern to his wife.

But it was fitting that Mary also should honor St. Joseph, and that he should live so that, could such a

thing again have been possible, Mary, who is the mirror of justice, might have taken example from him, and had reason to admire the sanctity of her earthly spouse.

What a saint, therefore, was St. Joseph among the saints! I remarked secondly: The degree of glory in heaven depends on the measure of graces which are imparted to the Christian here on earth, on account of his state in life; therefore, a fuller measure of grace was meted out to the Apostles than to other saints; since Christ elected them for an office which was above that of all others. They were to become the heralds of faith, the foundation and pillars of glory, surrounding the throne of Jesus Christ in heaven.

If this be so, how great must not have been that measure of grace which was imparted to St. Joseph, whose office far surpassed that of the Apostles, as we have just now considered!

The means to increase grace in our hearts is, above all, prayer; therefore, even the Apostles admonish the faithful to pray for it.

How effective, therefore, must the prayer of St. Joseph have been, of him who lived in the closest proximity to Jesus and Mary; prayed with them, and to whom they surely never refused a petition. Not only that; but it was he for whom Jesus, as his foster-Son, and Mary, as his virginal spouse, were obliged to pray.

O Joseph, thrice happy saint! St. Bernardine of Siena is right, when he draws from this single reason the conclusion that Joseph was the greatest of all the

saints on earth, and is now abiding nearest to Mary in heaven, and, after her, nearest the throne of the Source of all graces !

Finally, the degree of glory in heaven depends on the fidelity with which a soul uses the graces imparted to her for her blessed end. Such was the case with the Apostles. They lived so that they all with perfect justice could cry out to the faithful, with St. Paul : "Be ye my imitators, as I am an imitator of Christ."

Still, how much more does this hold good of our holy father St. Joseph, who had the example and pattern of Christ, during thirty years before his eyes, and, therefore, the opportunity of earning daily, yes, hourly, merits of the highest degree of recompense in heaven.

The Apostles cared for the salvation of souls, which were once slaves of the devil. St. Joseph had to provide for Jesus and Mary!!

What is done for a dearly beloved child, a father will reward more richly than he will benefits conferred upon a number of others. How precious in the eyes of God, therefore, were the works of St. Joseph, for they all related to Jesus and Mary, for whom he worked and lived. Yes, next to Mary, we dare and must call out to St. Joseph : "Others have gathered riches, but thou dost surpass them all." Thus St. Joseph lived up to his latest breath. At the thought of God the Judge, St. Peter and Paul, and with them all the saints, seemed to tremble, but such was not the case with St. Joseph. Even without a particular revelation he could entertain no doubt of his salvation.

Jesus and Mary were in duty bound, on account of his relation to them, to pray for him, and St. Joseph expired in their arms.

Besides this, a tradition exists in the Church which asserts that St. Joseph is already united with His glorified body in heaven; and would it not be most appropriate that he, as the third person of the holy family, should, like Jesus and Mary, be thus glorified above all the choirs of saints? And it is an incontrovertible fact that no relics of the great saint have ever been found.

Honor, therefore, St. Joseph as the greatest of saints, above all the other celestial inhabitants of heaven. Christ, indeed, speaks of St. John as the greatest of all born of a woman; but as it is evident that he and his blessed Mother are exceptions to this, we may believe that St. Joseph, for the reason above mentioned, is likewise not included. His place in heaven, as it was on earth, is by the side of Jesus the King of all saints, and by Mary their Queen, and his glory therefore outshines that of the most glorious. Therefore, children of the Church, honor him as the greatest, the dearest, the most powerful of the saints, and recommend yourselves to his protection now and at the hour of your death. Amen!

SECOND SERMON.

“Go to Joseph.”—Gen. xli.

WHEN our thoughts dwell upon the saints in heaven, the feeling which predominates in our hearts is admiration of their sanctity and glory. Our first duty, therefore, is to show them the veneration due to them, as the glorified children and servants of God; and among them all, who is so justly entitled to every honor from us as St. Joseph? If every saint has a claim upon our veneration, how much more is this true of him, the holiest of all the saints, whom we have already contemplated, body and soul, by the side of Jesus and Mary on his heavenly throne?

We are, however, accustomed to manifest the sentiments of our veneration toward the saints by offering prayers in their honor, by singing hymns in praise of their virtues, and by saying special litanies to them. But more than all do we show our reverence and esteem by seeking refuge in their intercession in all our needs.

In this regard, each one can follow the impulse of his own devotion, and seek the protection of whatever saint in whose intercession he has the most confidence.

But how great soever may be our esteem for the ability of the different saints to aid us, it is, above all, St. Joseph, in whom we may, with the greatest assurance of being heard, confide and hope.

Beloved in Christ, listen to my reasons for saying

this, and reflect upon them during the course of your whole lives.

O Mary, grant that we may ever confide in the power of the great St. Joseph to hear and help us!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, for the greater glory of God!

If I wish to-day to animate your courage and my own so that it may never falter—to fly to St. Joseph in all our needs—nothing can serve so well for this as the declaration of a saint who is held in the highest esteem in the Church of God.

St. Teresa says: “I do not remember to have asked St. Joseph for any thing which he did not grant me.” This is a very powerful proof, coming as it does from a saint who certainly never was guilty of exaggeration. What St. Teresa contributed on her part that caused St. Joseph always to grant her petitions, was, no doubt, the unbounded confidence with which she never failed to approach him; and also that her requests were always made in view of her wonderful vow, viz: “Ever to do what was most perfect.” Let us imitate her example; and, filled with gratitude, we shall give that honor to St. Joseph which is justly due. As to the confidence which St. Teresa placed in him, I am not astonished at its extent; but rather inclined to wonder that it is not shared to a greater degree by all the faithful. In view of this, I deem it advisable to consider briefly with you the reasons wherefore she

entertained it, for her motives for doing so exist for all the children of the Catholic Church.

We employ, with hope and trust, the intercession of the saints, because they are already with Christ, behold God face to face, and are intimately united with Him. Our confidence increases in proportion to the reasons we have for believing that they are exalted above all other saints, and particularly glorified before God according to their calling in His kingdom here on earth.

Secondly, the greater the merit through which they, while on earth, attained greater holiness by God's grace, the more firm will be our confidence in them, especially when they are saints whom our Lord, in different countries and in some special time of need, has appointed intercessors for the children of the Church.

In regard to the degree of glory to which St. Joseph is elevated in heaven, we behold him by the side of Jesus, in company with the Blessed Virgin Mary. This exaltation points, at the same time, to the degree of his union with God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost in the Most Holy Trinity. How indeed could God the Father refuse to hear the prayer of him whom He appointed to be His representative here on earth? In like manner how could God the Son deny him a request, since He was subject to him on earth as his foster-Son? And how could God the Holy Ghost remain deaf to any prayer of his, since He made him protector and spouse of her whom we have the right to designate as spouse of that Divine Spirit? Besides,

St. Joseph stands at the side of Jesus, who is at the same time Man, with Mary, His mother. Let him but give the faintest sign, and Mary surely will not refuse to unite her prayer with his that Jesus will grant the petition ; for Jesus is almighty, and, through this union with the Saviour and His mother, St. Joseph becomes, so to say, almighty himself.

As I said before, our confidence in the intercession of the saints is increased in proportion to the number of merits they gathered in the service of God, who deigns to glance at them, as we are assured in the Holy Scripture itself by the example of Moses, Job, and Jeremias the prophet.

But, in regard to St. Joseph, the merits of all the other saints are not to be compared to his, for his entire life was spent in the most tender solicitude for Jesus and Mary themselves ; and, therefore, each of his works, toils, labors, and affections were of immeasurable value.

Certainly we know of no achievement, individually, which the saints performed, and therefore we are not allowed to exalt one above the other ; but, in the case of St. Joseph, *he* stands pre-eminent above the rest, for the Scripture calls him perfect, just. *He* was, like Mary, a true mirror of perfection—without a blemish. How great, therefore, must be the pleasure with which the Most Holy Trinity contemplates him and grants all that he asks !

I repeat, that our assurance of being heard by the saints is more certain in regard to those who have

performed wonderful things for God, in particular places, and whom He has glorified in times of need as special intercessors.

In regard to the calling of St. Joseph, it was most high and holy, and should be appreciated by all the faithful; for he fostered and protected the Lord and Creator of the world, to whom nothing is impossible.

Very justly, therefore, the holy fathers behold, in the person of the Egyptian Joseph, a figure of St. Joseph. The former was called, by the king, *savior*, *helper*. He watched over the granaries and store-houses in which the grain was preserved for the daily bread; but St. Joseph of the New Law cared for the bread which was one day to serve as a nourishment for the nations of the whole universe.

Pharaoh said to the people: "If you want help, go to Joseph;" and our heavenly Father, the King of kings, says: "If you need help, go to Joseph; I will hear his prayers for you." What God once said to the three friends of Job—"Go ye to Job, he will pray for you, and I will hear his prayers"—is most true in regard to St. Joseph,—in all necessities of soul and body there is no exception. Child of the Church, when the dark clouds of grief overshadow your soul, go to Joseph; he is, through Jesus Christ, the consoler of the afflicted. When you are tempted, go to Joseph; call upon him, and the temptations will vanish, or you will victoriously conquer. And if you *should* yield to the tempter's voice, and fall into sin,

still go to Joseph; he will obtain for you the grace of true repentance and conversion.

Are you in good dispositions, but weak and tepid? Look up to Joseph, think of the glorious example of his sanctity, and he will obtain for you the grace of zeal. Are you afflicted with sickness? Go to Joseph, for he, too, is the health of the sick. If a St. Francis Xavier appeared to the suffering Marcellus, during his sickness, and said, "Invoke me, for you must know that I have influence in heaven," still more forcibly can the great saint, whom we devoutly honor to-day, declare the same.

Yes, even in your temporal necessities call upon him with confidence, but with the reservation that what you petition for will surely tend to your spiritual benefit; and through his powerful intercession your prayer will not fail to obtain a hearing.

And, more than all, since the Head of the Church Himself has most solemnly dedicated St. Joseph as the patron of the "universal Church," we should, with the utmost faith, seek his gracious assistance. If we have done so during life, then he will surely assist us at the hour of death. Then let us pray daily for this grace, that we, like St. Joseph, may yield up our spirits in the arms of Jesus and Mary; and that, beholding him in heaven, we may eternally thank him for the graces which, through his intercession, we obtained on earth. Amen!

THIRD SERMON.

“Whose name was Joseph, of the house of David.”—Luke i, 27.

WHO could even think of the glorious St. Joseph, and not feel his heart instantly filled with the deepest veneration and admiration for him, and without being at once impelled to have recourse, with the greatest confidence, to his gracious intercession? Divine Providence has distinguished him in so wonderful a manner above all the other saints, even above the whole celestial choir of angels, by elevating him to the dignity of foster-father of Christ, the Incarnate Son of God, and virginal spouse of the Queen of all saints, that his mediation with the Source of all grace can not fail to be most powerful.

The exceptional graces which have been conferred upon him show us in a moment that the glory and power which surround St. Joseph in heaven, must be, indeed, great beyond conception. But, beloved in Christ, it is not sufficient to *admire* the heroic lives of the saints, nor even to feel that their intercession is most powerful, for there is one point in the veneration of the saints of much greater importance, and that is, that we are zealous in imitating their virtues. It is this disposition and determination of mind which tend to develop and directly test the greater part of the veneration which we profess to cherish for the saints, and it is particularly in this regard that our confidence will show itself most pleasing to God, as

well as to the dear foster-father of the little infant Jesus.

The very name of this great saint contains a lesson in itself as to the manner in which our endeavors to imitate him should proceed, for the signification of *Joseph* is "The Increasing." And truly, from his wonderful virtue, he is fully entitled to it, for the light of his sanctity grew more and more brilliant, until at last it merged into the glory of the eternal day. This meaning will intimate to us the importance of striving ever to *advance* in our journey along the way of perfection, that we may resemble the more closely our patron, St. Joseph, who is also the patron of the universal Church.

What our progress in virtue particularly depends upon shall be made plain to you to-day by a careful consideration of the virtues which distinguished St. Joseph, and which in the course of my sermon I will place before your eyes.

O Mary, obtain for us the grace to go on in the way of perfection with a zeal similar to that of him who was appointed by God to assist thee in the guardianship of thy divine Son.

I speak in the holy name of Jesus, for the greater honor and glory of God!

"Walk before Me, and be perfect." Thus runs the word of the Lord to Abraham, the father of the faithful. "Be ye perfect as your Father in heaven is per-

fect," is the injunction of Christ to all the children of men.

These words of the Lord indicate at the same time the condition in which we must be to satisfy this command, or, as it may be called, this challenge to the human race. We must strive in every action of our lives to do always the most holy and divine will, even in matters which appear to us of trifling import; and not only must we avoid evil, but practise with continually increasing zeal the duties of our state of life, never for a moment losing sight of the goal we wish to reach—perfection.

It is of his own endeavors that St. Paul speaks when he says: "Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting the things that are behind, and stretching forth myself to those that are before, I pursue towards the mark."

In a greater or less degree every child of the Church is interested in becoming better and better, after a true Catholic knowledge has so penetrated his heart that he appreciates the duty which rests upon him to advance as far as he can in the path of virtue.

To-day I have not in view those every-day Christians who are satisfied with fulfilling the most general obligations which devolve upon them in daily life. I speak to souls who complain that, with all their care to become more pleasing to God, they remain always the same, and, to their utter discouragement, make no progress whatever; who have, indeed, reason to say of themselves: "Instead of advancing, we go back—

we know it too well, and, alas! others remark it also, especially those who are constantly with us. How can we help it?" In answer I will call your attention to those virtues which appeared most conspicuously in the life of St. Joseph, which shine forth with the greatest splendor, and are to be called his characteristic virtues.

In the first place, St. Joseph had a most profound esteem for the dignity of his calling. Like St. John the Baptist, he was most deeply impressed with the holiness of the office, which enabled him to walk worthily by the side of Jesus and Mary, and the greatness of the obligation which rested upon him to fulfill its duties in a fitting manner.

The great point wherein so many Christians are deficient, is a want of appreciation of the fact that God has created us for His kingdom; and that where Christ is, there is His kingdom; therefore all upon earth that prevents us from following Him is naught but vanity of vanities, and never sufficient to satisfy our hearts.

The generality of Christians seem to place worldly happiness above all; their principal care is but to possess and to enjoy for as many years as they can. Hence their carelessness in all that relates to their eternal salvation, on the one hand, and, on the other, their excessive care for the things of earth.

Show me a Christian with a will full of sincerity in the service of God, perfectly satisfied to embrace the state of life which God has marked out for him, and he will surely walk before the Lord, and make rapid progress in perfection.

St. Joseph lived in *retirement* and *silence*—a *hidden* life. He lived in the deepest recollection of spirit, keeping God ever in view. And here we perceive one of the principal obstacles which stands in the path of so many who fain would think that they are seeking the most rapid way to perfection.

The constant turmoil in which they live is not conducive to a holy life. They shrink from that solitude wherein the Holy Ghost would speak to their hearts. They are given to much conversing, and that, where neither duty nor Christian charity demands it, is a great source of tepidity and lukewarmness. It sets a most pernicious example, which in many instances destroys whatever efforts are made for the sanctification of souls.

To this is added an excessive fondness for pleasure. What was at once the solace, the joy, and the recreation of St. Joseph, was his intercourse with Jesus and Mary; and this will impart to us a very important lesson. Christ our Lord is the model of all perfection, and after Him ranks Mary as the most faithful imitator of the splendor of those virtues which adorned her Son. For thirty years St. Joseph had this immaculate Mother and her divine Son daily before his eyes. He lived with Jesus and Mary, which circumstance gave him occasion to regulate his life in accordance with their example; and this he did with an assiduity and a fidelity proportionate to his knowledge of and love for them, and the ardor of his desire to resemble them daily more and more.

But, alas! how far removed are men in general

from thus knowing and loving Christ and His blessed Mother! Happy the Christian whose heart is inflamed with intense fervor for this dear Mother who was so tenderly cherished by our Saviour; he will continually contemplate the example of her virtues, and fly to her refuge in every spiritual necessity. Such a one leads, indeed, a holy and zealous life; for love for Mary can not exist where there is no love for Christ.

Then, by frequent reception of and intimate union with Him in the Most Holy Sacrament, he will acquire a love of prayer, and a deeper knowledge of Jesus and the life which is hidden with Christ in God. This will open for him an inexhaustible source of grace for the sanctification of his life, and replenish his heart with an ardent love of the cross, and with perfect resignation to the most holy will of God.

In the holy life of the great St. Joseph these dispositions shine most brilliantly forth. God tries His elect by adversity and tribulations, and the dear saint whose festival we celebrate to-day was no exception to the universal decree. Trials fell to the lot of St. Joseph, and he bowed in submission to the divine will; he remained silent, speaking not even to the angel who spoke to him.

What a heavenly model of silence for all who are really in earnest in their wish to advance in virtue! What resignation, what love of the cross, distinguished this great saint! I declare to you, most beloved in Christ, that the spirit of shrinking from the cross, from self-denial, which we find in so many Christians, is one

of the principal causes of the little progress they make in virtue. Oh, what joy it is to meet one who has a tender devotion to the cross through the love of Christ, who finds therein a balm for every ill, and who, when the hand of the Lord is heavy upon him, is willing to give himself to God without reserve!

Therefore, O St. Joseph! we pray thee obtain for us grace and strength to imitate those virtues which shone with such brilliant luster in thy life, and we shall, no doubt, if consistent, reach the height of Christian perfection.—Amen!

FEAST OF THE ANNUNCIATION.

FIRST SERMON.

“And the angel Gabriel was sent by God into a city of Galilee called Nazareth, and the name of the virgin was Mary.”—Luke 1.

ATHWART the somber season of Lent, the deepening shadows of which grow darker still until the bright dawn of the resurrection morn dispels their gloom, there flashes the glory of a divine fact which gives to this festival of the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary a rank equal to that of the greatest feast of the Church. This divine fact may well inspire our hearts with the most tender, the most exquisite, the most joyful, affections of thanksgiving, for to its existence we are indebted for the inestimable grace of Redemption.

It was upon this day, beloved in Christ, that the angel Gabriel—to whom God had given in charge the precious soul of her whom He had from all eternity chosen to be the Mother of the Word Incarnate—bore to the tender Virgin, whose purity had never been tarnished by the slightest breath of evil, the joyful tidings that she was, while preserving the pearl of virginity, to become the Mother of God.

It was upon this day, then, that the Son of God assumed our human nature for the redemption and

salvation of fallen man ; and yet there is, in general, but too little attention devoted to the consideration of the mystery we commemorate thereon ; for, by the greater number of Christians, it is regarded and celebrated simply as a feast in honor of Mary. But, in fact, it is the very corner-stone upon which rest all the other feasts,—commemorating, as it does, an event which can not fail to fill the human heart with adoration, gratitude, and the most intense consolation.

Every thing depended upon the decree of God whether, in His infinite mercy, He would be pleased to stretch forth His arm and rescue the human race from the abyss of a wretchedness too profound almost to be conceived. But, since “the angel of the Lord declared unto Mary” the message of salvation, and the Son of God assumed on that very day her flesh, every thing was changed ; and from the Feast of the Annunciation came forth Christmas, Easter, Pentecost, and the eternal triumph of the Church.

Let us consider to-day the message of the angel to Mary in its divine sublimity, as well as in the importance with which it is invested for the children of men.

O Mary, who was already full of grace when the angel saluted thee, and elected thee not only to become the Mother of God, but also Mother of all the children of God, accept us to-day as thy children !

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, for the greater honor and glory of God !

If, my beloved Christians, the words of the holy gospels—whenever we open the pages of the inspired volume, but especially when we hear them from the lips of the priest on the occasion of the celebration of the feasts of the Church—tend ever to inspire us *with joy*, and to elevate our hearts to God, this is especially true of the gospel which is set apart for this joyous day.

“At that time the angel Gabriel was sent to a town named Nazareth, to a Virgin called Mary.” Blessed words! for, as often as we hear them, the happy event which we commemorate to-day arises immediately before our eyes, clear and distinct, as if we had been present when the glory of the angel irradiated the humble little room at Nazareth. In spirit, we behold the Immaculate Virgin, united with her God in fervent prayer, oblivious of all but Him, when, lo! an angel of the Lord appeared before her. We can almost hear his voice, in the tones of which still linger the sweetness of that celestial music to which it were bliss to list.

We have every reason to learn and to ponder deeply upon the signification of this angelic message, which was a most holy, a most solemn, a most momentous, a most consoling, and joyful message, both for the Blessed Virgin and for her devoted children.

In every message the importance is increased or lessened according to the dignity of the sender. A message is brought to us by a relative, acquaintance, or inferior, and produces but little effect upon us; we may not even delay the messenger long enough to hear what he has to say.

But suppose a person of high rank has something to say to us,—a Prince, a King, an Emperor, the President, the Pope! With what consideration we treat the messenger! How very attentively we listen, that we may know precisely what he has to impart! Imagine, then, how important, and, at the same time, how holy, was the message of the angel! It came from the Most Holy Trinity—God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost! It was the message of the Infinite Majesty, the most merciful sanctity of God to Mary, and, through her, to the entire human race!

It was a most solemn message. What invests a message with significance, is the form and manner in which it is transmitted. Here we behold an archangel—one of the seven princes of heaven—declaring the will of the Most High; and who can conceive what myriads of angels attended Gabriel when he presented himself before Mary, Queen of angels! Who can picture the profound respect with which he saluted her, in whom he already beheld the Mother of the Son of God made man! With what deep veneration he addressed her, the chosen one of all the daughters of Eve,—destined from all eternity to be exalted as mistress above the whole celestial choir!

It was a most momentous message, for the subject of a message is what constitutes its importance. It made known to the world, to the human race, that the possessions lost through Adam would be restored; it heralded a great victory gained over the enemy of souls; it announced that the foe, from

whom death and destruction would surely come, was shorn of his terrible strength. Let us suppose that, being under sentence of death, we had been granted a reprieve, or rather that the sentence had been entirely revoked, and that we had come into the possession of a great fortune, by which our happiness is forever secured: would we not consider the message which brought us the news glad tidings of great joy?

Apply not one but all of these circumstances to the message conveyed to Mary by the angel, and we shall realize in some degree its stupendous character. Adam listened to the voice of the seducer, and his fall deprived his hapless posterity of their promised happiness,—that of being one day permitted to behold God face to face, in the possession and enjoyment of His beatitude and all the exquisite joys of heaven.

All this was lost. However, amid the gloom which, for four thousand years, hung over a world groveling in darkness and in sin, there glimmered one ray of light in the promise of a coming Redeemer; but the time set apart for the expected and desired event was yet unknown.

Then, when the fullness of time was accomplished, Gabriel appeared and announced unto Mary that she had been appointed or chosen to become the Mother of the Messiah,—of that child whose birth was heralded to the watching shepherds by strains of angelic music, as the celestial choir adored the Infant God. Humanly speaking, mankind had indeed reason to be alarmed; for, although the promise of a Redeemer had

already been made in paradise to our first parents, yet the wickedness which prevailed over the whole earth was so terrible, that man might well tremble lest the Lord should declare it to be forfeited entirely. He might well apprehend that it was a conditional promise; the more so since four thousand years had already rolled down the stream of time, and the Redeemer did not appear, while man, through his own fault, sank deeper and deeper into the abyss of sin! The word of the angel to Mary relieved the faithful few from this harrowing anxiety.

“The Saviour cometh!” We are rescued from sin and hell! From this day the heart of the Redeemer will throb beneath the loving heart of the Virgin Mother, who will present His first petition for the salvation of mankind to the eternal Father.

Joyful message, which brought such happy tidings to us! To regain, through Christ, the precious gift of heavenly grace; to become again, through Him, children of God; to behold the gates of heaven open for us, and to have it in our power to enjoy the delights of that celestial paradise for an eternity which will never, never end,—Mary for our Mother, and the Lord for our portion forever!

It is true that our individual sins had opened still wider the infernal gates, and made deeper far the yawning pit of hell; but, through the merits of Christ, the hope of a blessed pardon was held out to all “men of good will.”

The terrestrial paradise was lost, it is true; but in

its place the kingdom of God on earth—the Church—would henceforth become for man a garden of delights. The sorrow, the pain, the anguish of earthly trouble must still encompass us, no longer, however, as punishments for sin, but to serve as occasions of merit for the increase of our eternal joy and happiness.

The concupiscence of the flesh, indeed, should still remain a constant cause of warfare; but, as a compensation, the measure of grace would be so multiplied as to enable the Christian to valiantly combat and bear away the victor's crown, and exalt his glory in heaven.

The penalty of death had been pronounced upon man; but, through that dread decree, he can attain to the possession of a glory and delight which would never have been his had not Adam sinned in paradise.

In a word, infinitely more was conferred upon man through Christ, the Son of Mary, the heavenly Adam, than he lost through Adam, our first parent. We not only became again children of God, and gained once more the right to call Him Father; but we were permitted to call His Incarnate Son our Brother. For, since the Son of God assumed our flesh and blood from Mary, He is, therefore, true Man, even as from all eternity, in His own divine Person, He was and is God. Oh, what an important, what a welcome and consoling message!

All that can bring to the human heart the sweetest joy and solace is comprised in this message of the angel to Mary, as we will see if we take to heart all

that has been said,—not merely hearing and believing it with a dead or dying faith, but also considering, and applying it to ourselves.

In this, unfortunately, we are often wanting. Too many Christians are prone to celebrate the mysteries commemorated by the festivals of the Church only in their general relation, and not by reflecting what influence those articles of faith and divine truths should individually effect for us.

Yes, beloved in Christ, be ye who ye may, the message of salvation directed by Gabriel to Mary bears an individual relation to every one of you, even as if there had been but the one soul on earth for whose salvation the Saviour came.

You were sunk deep in the abyss of woe, not only through the disobedience of Adam, but through innumerable personal sins, which threatened you with destruction for time and eternity. But the Saviour was conceived in the chaste womb of the Virgin Mary, and the lovely dawn of a blessed hope brightened the darkened world. This hope has a more secure foundation for you, since, without any merit of your own, you have been called to be members of the true Church.

Try, therefore, before you leave this holy place, to excite in your hearts all those affections which animated the heart of Mary on receiving the message of the angel. First, adore and thank God for having created you to His own image and likeness, and for having spared you when you were yet in a state of sin; but, above all, for having sent His only-begotten Son

to redeem and save you. Renew your resolution to live as true children of God, as if Christ had been received into your hearts also as the pledge of a better life.

Thus you will become strong; and, although you may not have the happiness enjoyed by the Immaculate Virgin and Mother—of walking by the side of the Incarnate Son of God—you may, while living as her faithful children, enter one day into the communion of her glory and beatitude as children of God, also rescued through the incarnation of His eternal Son.—Amen!

SECOND SERMON.

“Mary said: Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me according to Thy word.”—Luke i, 38.

THE glorious festival of the Blessed Virgin Mary, from one point of view, refers expressly and solemnly to the message of the angel to Mary; for that message contains precisely what, properly speaking, renders life valuable for us. As the Church entones in the Easter preface on Holy Saturday: “Of what use would it be to have been born, had we not had the happiness to be redeemed?”

The work of the redemption and delivery of man was destined to be accomplished through the incarnation of the Son of God. This divine truth, the personal union of our human nature with the second person of the Blessed Trinity, is the most stupendous fact which the omnipotence of God ever effected or could effect. Though He might call into existence myriads of worlds, the splendor of which would far surpass this globe of ours, such a proof of His power would never appear so incomprehensible to us, as, that God, in the might of His immutable and eternal nature, united Himself, in the course of time, with a creature—a created nature—and entered this world in suffering, and all for us!

This article of faith also points to the great mystery of the freedom of the will, which, however, without the concurrence of God, can do nothing, entirely nothing,

absolutely nothing in the order of salvation; and this co-operation is required by God to enable us to participate in the fruits of the redemption. This will be understood when I say that the will remains perfectly free in spite of its total dependence upon God; and, therefore, man must, of his own voluntary choice, embrace the service of God.

Even from the Blessed Virgin Mary God required consent before the incarnation of His divine Son took place; therefore,

If we wish to participate in the fruits of incarnation, we must, with the dispositions of her most obedient heart, confess before God: "Behold the servant of the Lord; be it done to me according to His word!"

O Mary, obtain for us to-day from Jesus, the blessed fruit of thy womb, the grace of perfect submission to the will of God!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, for the greater honor and glory of God!

Christ was, upon one occasion, in company with Mary His mother, and other relatives according to the flesh, when His benign gaze rested suddenly upon them, and He gave utterance to the following words: "Whosoever doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven is my mother, my brother." By these words Christ instructs us that there is a spiritual union regarding the effects of nature and grace, and that it depends on the co-operation of our free will as to how

far we victoriously complete the great affair of our salvation, and, according to this measure, obtain a higher or lower degree of glory in heaven. I apply this truth to the event we celebrate to-day, and say: "As the Lord sent an angel to Mary with the message of salvation, so God sends to every human soul that same message, through a call to the Holy Catholic Church, through the interior encouragement of grace, and through exterior circumstances; and, as He looked for the consent of Mary from the angel, so does He require our consent to follow the call of grace by a free decision of will." In this way, beloved in Christ, we shall spiritually receive Christ, as if He had been indeed born therein, and, by the continued co-operation of our will, He will grow in our hearts to the perfection of the life of grace. In this regard, every thing depends on the sincerity, firmness, and fidelity of the will.

When the angel addressed Mary desiring her consent to become the mother of God—of the Son of God made man—it was not alone honor and glory which he offered her; for when that radiant being stood before her, she saw in spirit all the sacrifices, renunciations, mortifications, sufferings the most intense, and anguish the most bitter, which she would have to undergo in the days of her earthly pilgrimage, by becoming the mother of Jesus. She beheld the eve of the first Christmas, when she and her holy spouse, St. Joseph, two homeless wanderers, sought refuge in the stable at Bethlehem, because there was no room

for them in the inn. The flight into Egypt, the weary, toilsome life which she, with her dear ones, led both there and at Nazareth, arose before her. And the veil of futurity was withdrawn that she might see the terror and grief which would overwhelm her soul when, later on, she would accompany her Son on His apostolic journeys through the land. All that the malice, obstinacy, and falsehood of His persecutors would cause that divine Son to suffer, she saw; and more than all, her spirit well nigh fainted within her when, in anticipation, her maternal heart was rent with the anguish of that dread day on which her Son would die. Ah! then indeed she felt the sharpness of that sword of grief which, according to holy Simeon, was to pierce her heart when she would receive the lacerated body of her beloved Son after He had expired upon the cross: and thus would be Mary the Queen of martyrs, the mother of Jesus, who is the King of martyrs!

The sacrifice which God required of her rose up in its might on that Feast of the Annunciation—in ages past and gone—and yet she hesitated not one moment in her submissive acceptance, but gave an immediate and decided consent, in those words which millions of devout Christians, her loving children, repeat whenever the Angelus bell peals forth at morning, noon, and eve: “Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done unto me according to Thy word.”

Let me make the application, and say that invitations are given to every human soul to enter into the

bonds of fraternal relationship with Christ ; but we must take special care to know how we can fulfill the holy will of God in the most perfect manner, that we may act ever as His own true children, and derive the richest fruits from the mystery we commemorate to-day. We must keep ever in view the important truth that if we would belong to Christ, imitate Him and secure our eternal salvation, we must live in a manner wholly different from the children of this world. We have not been placed upon earth to care for its perishable treasures, empty honors, and transitory joys. The watchword of our efforts to attain eternal life, whether we be wealthy or poor, blessed with health or afflicted with sickness, whether God in His goodness grants us "length of days," or early calls us to Himself, should be: "Thy will be done." "Behold the handmaid of the Lord ; may it be done to me according to Thy word." Beloved Christians, if, in accordance with this declaration the most holy will of God should please to deprive you of worldly wealth, or of what is more precious still, your honor, that fair fame which is so justly dear to your hearts ; if you should even be covered with ignominy, and treated as the last of your kind, your unfaltering reply, when the bitter cup is held to your quivering lips, should be: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord ; be it done to me according to Thy word."

Finally, if God should demand that in the performance of your daily duties your health and strength give way, and that you languish a helpless sufferer

for years ; nay, if He require the sacrifice of life itself, and that under the most painful circumstances, you should be ready to say with willing heart : “ Father, Thy will be done.” “ I am Thy servant, Thy hand-maid ; be it done to me according to Thy word.”

O happy, thrice happy the Christian whose heart is thus disposed ; for the Saviour has indeed chosen it for his abiding-place, and Jesus will lead him on to the perfection of spiritual life ! But take care lest Satan assume the garb of an angel of light, and deceive you, as he so often does, with those over whom he fears he has lost his power, and whom he tries to delude by such diabolical arts.

Mary, the most prudent Virgin, as she is styled by the Church, evinced, indeed, an eminent degree of prudence by her manner of testing the truth of the angelic message. “ How can this be ? ” she said, “ for I know not man ; ” and not until the satisfactory reply of the celestial guide was given did she utter the words which saved us from sin and hell. She had every reason to believe that it was an angel from heaven who appeared before her, and yet she was alarmed, and distrusted his address. What an example for us !

Those by whom we are surrounded, to whom we go for counsel, are men, frail and sinful men, liable to err,—wearing an appearance of zeal ; but perhaps inwardly, they are devouring wolves. Prudence ! Oh, how essential it is to the fulfillment, not of our own will but of the most holy will of God. *True* prudence we need ; for there is no greater bar to our sanctifi-

cation, and to the salvation of the Church in general, than its counterfeit which prevails to such an extent ; that worldly prudence which, in all that concerns the salvation of our souls, means ruin. To one who has only earthly motives in view many things will seem but folly, and yet they are the very acme of prudence.

Many Christians, through human respect, or a fear lest others should be unwilling to assist them, refrain from soliciting their aid in some work for the honor of God ; for example, the propagation of His kingdom on earth, the Holy Church. The angel who delivered the message to Mary, might well teach us a lesson of faith ; for the miracle which he announced to the holy Virgin shows us that nothing is impossible with God. O children of the Holy Catholic Church ! in this, our nineteenth century, millions of wonders effected by God are placed before our spiritual vision ; if, then, we are convinced that this or that is truly the holy will of God, our own weakness should never for a moment be a cause of dejection or discouragement. The more unworthy we are in ourselves, the more resplendent will be the glorification of God, if, in spite of all impediments, the work is accomplished by us, and accomplished well. Therefore, in every event of life our watchword should be those words of the Blessed Virgin Mary, so touching in their humility, so admirable in their submission to the divine will : “ Behold the handmaid of the Lord ; may it be done unto me according to Thy divine will ! ”—Amen !

THIRD SERMON.

“And the angel said to her: Hail full of grace: the Lord is with thee.”—
Luke i, 28.

THE beautiful festival which we celebrate to-day is called the Feast of the Annunciation; yet it might as fittingly be known as that of the Redemption of the World.

The angel salutes Mary as the chosen Mother of the promised Messiah, who is now about to accomplish visibly on earth the work of the most merciful love of God for mankind, “in the fullness of time,” as the prophets of old predicted it centuries before.

To understand clearly the signification of this feast we must earnestly consider the aim and end of the whole creation, and what relation the grace of redemption bears to the fallen human race. The aim and end of the creation, my dearest Christians, is the exterior glorification of God. The various relations of His infinite perfections toward creatures should serve as reflections of the different attributes of these infinite perfections.

We behold in the angelic world of heaven the infinite sanctity of God, while those fallen spirits who suffer in the abyss of hell reflect the infinite justice of their Sovereign Lord. The whole exterior visible world proclaims with many tongues His omnipotence, wisdom, benignity, and solicitude for the vast universe, and for every individual creature therein; but *man* was

marked out as the object on which the infinite mercy of God was to celebrate His triumph. And this, indeed, was accomplished through Christ by His entrance into the world, by the welcome message which Gabriel on this blessed day brought to the Immaculate Virgin Mary.

This sublime truth affords a subject for the most consoling meditation if we but realize it in all its perfections. This, however, is the case with so few that I may venture to doubt whether one single child of the Church, among the many who listen to my words to-day, has ever considered, in its deepest meaning, the divine assurance and blessed hope with which this message is replete.

Oh, how sweetly it whispers to our hearts that, by the redemption of the human race, the triumph of God's infinite mercy has been achieved!

O Mary, Mother of mercy, pray for us that the triumph of this loveliest of God's attributes may be celebrated in our hearts also!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, for the greater honor and glory of God!

Is God merciful? Does He grant to the sinner a gracious pardon? To this none of us can give a final answer. Certainly He is, in the abstract, Infinite Mercy; and from the dark and drear abyss of chaos he has called the world into existence, and wishes to confer happiness upon those who will dwell therein. But should rational creatures, upon whom He has bestowed the pre-

cious gift of faith, dare to oppose His will and venture to transgress His divine commands, they have no right to expect forgiveness from an offended Majesty Who is under no obligation to evince His mercy to them. God is free. Of all the radiant angels who defied His wrath in heaven not one received forgiveness; nay, not one grace, which might have led them back, was vouchsafed to those rebel spirits—not one moment in which to repent and return to God; but when that daring thought of pride, which would fain have disturbed the peace of heaven, was consented to, the doom was sealed; the fiery sword of the sovereign justice flashed over the defiant host, and from the bliss of heaven they were hurled into the fathomless depths of hell. Therefore I say that, in regard to those sins which stain the hearts of the human race, we naturally ask the question: “Does God forgive our sins?” God alone can answer, and He *has* answered, and that more explicitly than is the case with any of His other divine attributes. Open the pages of the inspired volume, and read the assertions of Moses and the prophets,—those of the psalmist in the Old, and of Christ and His Apostles in the New Testament. In proof of this, I need only mention some of these solemn declarations of the Lord: “In that same hour when the sinner returns to Me his injustice shall no longer be remembered.” So says the Lord through the prophet Ezekiel. And again: “Though your sins be red as scarlet, they shall become whiter than snow.” So has the Lord spoken by the prophet Isaías: “The wise man

shall not glory in his wisdom." So we read in another place: "Nor the strong one in his strength, only that he acknowledge Me, who am merciful and forgiving towards the sinner." "As sure as I live," says God the Lord, "I will not the death of the sinner, but that he be converted and live." "Praise the Lord, for He is good, and His mercy endureth forever." This we read in the one hundred and thirty-fifth psalm, and, indeed, throughout all the psalms we trace similar eulogies of the mercy of God ; while in regard to the other divine attributes no such frequent praise ascends on high. And surely every Christian, especially every child of the Church, has had ample reason, in the course of his life, to be reminded of this boundless mercy ; chiefly, however, when he intended to seek reconciliation with God in the Sacrament of Penance.

But how few have ever realized and considered in their hearts that the message of the angel declared the *triumph* of the infinite mercy of God in the redemption of man ! To understand this clearly we must think well on the following questions, and consider the answers in every light. The first question is, "Who pardons?" The second, "Who is pardoned?" The third, "What is pardoned?" and the fourth, "*How* is it pardoned?" To assign to the principal thought the most prominent place, I will say, that God wished to confer the gracious boon of pardon, but man seemed only anxious to thrust back the munificent bounty of the divine hand. Nevertheless, infinite mercy triumphed, and changed the poisonous stream

of sin to a health-giving fountain, wherein the sinner may find balm for the most deadly wounds of the soul. Deny me not your closest attention to every word I may utter. Even as the sun, in his onward course, shines ever with more resplendent brilliancy until he has reached the zenith of his glory, so will you, if you follow the course of my remarks, obtain at their close a clear and luminous insight into what I wish to prove.

Now, then, the first question: "Who pardons?" God, the offended One; God, the infinite Majesty, Who has no need of us, whom He called into existence from nothing.

Second Question: "Whom does he pardon?" Man, the lowest of all the rational creatures, who offends again and again. From each of the nine celestial choirs some angels fell; yes, even Cherubim and Seraphim, and Lucifer himself, the brightest of all, was buried in darkness and despair. Not one of them found mercy, and yet they sinned but once, and that in thought.

Third Question: What does God pardon? Every sin, no matter how great; to every sinner who responds to the call of grace, and returning with heartfelt sorrow to the path of right, fulfills the conditions necessary for reconciliation with Him. Christians, consider for a moment all that is implied in the words: *Every sin*. There have lived on earth men who have outraged Christ in His own divine person, and this not upon Good Friday only, but over and over again in the long period of nineteen centuries.

There have been wretches, so lost to every feeling of good, that they threw the Most Holy Sacrament on the ground, and trampling upon it with their unholy feet, outraged this precious legacy of Christ. Yet had they turned to God with truly repentant hearts, they would have found a loving welcome from Him Whom they had so deeply offended. No matter, then, how grievous or how numerous the sins, it is an article of faith that God is always ready to forgive the contrite sinner who has recourse to the Sacrament of Penance; for has He not said: "Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven?" "What sins?" says St. Bernard. "No matter what! And what sinners?" The Lord makes no exceptions. But even that does not yet prove the triumph of the infinite mercy of God.

Listen to the fourth question and its answer: "How does God pardon?" God longed to forgive, but man arrayed himself against that infinite goodness, so that the offended One must make the advances, since, of himself, the offender can do nothing meritorious for eternal life. Infinite praise to infinite mercy! So full of love and compassion was the Lord that He took the first step towards rescuing us from everlasting woe. "When we were His enemies He loved us, and drew us mercifully to Himself," as St. John assures us. But man did not respond. Bethlehem rejects Him, the symbolical meaning of which is this: In consequence of original sin every human being, from the moment of its conception, bears a heart fast closed against the Lord.

But, my dearest Christians, man's ingratitude did not stop there ; for St. Paul says : " We seized Him, dragged Him out of the city, and nailed Him to the cross," that is, by our sins ; for He, the Lamb of God, took upon Himself all the sins of the world ; and the avenging arm of the justice of His heavenly Father was stayed. He sweats blood, He is scourged, crowned with thorns, spit upon, and treated in the most insulting manner ; His sacred shoulders shrink from the weight of the cross, as amid the jeers and cries of the cruel mob His faltering steps go on to Calvary ; He bends beneath the heavy load—He falls ; a second, yes, even a third time, He sinks to the ground, and the avenging justice of His eternal Father is stayed ; He is trampled under foot, they lay violent hands upon Him, and nail Him to the cross and as it is raised aloft, new torture is inflicted on the suffering Lamb of God. His wounds are opened afresh, until all that is human in Him can scarcely bear the pain. The angelic hosts are hovering near, and look with the tenderest compassion on the Son of God made man. They contemplate with deepest pity the awful sufferings by which the redemption of the human race is won. " O children of Adam ! " they fain would cry—" for the sinful thought of a single moment the justice of God refused to spare our companions, and hurled them to the black abyss of a hell enkindled by the avenging breath of an outraged Deity ; what then will become of you ? "

Lucifer, surrounded by the infernal hosts, is at the

foot of the cross. In their diabolical joy, what may have been their thoughts? Probably these:

"If we, for one single offense, were cast out of heaven, and doomed to burn forever in hell; if, for a rebellious thought, we have been punished by never-ending torments, what will be the torture of that hell prepared for you, O recreant children of men?" Angels and devils look upon Jesus and are silent, awaiting the punishment which will surely be adjudged to the human race, and at last the livid lips of the Crucified One part to speak. Then do angels and demons expect to hear the words: "Father, I came to save, not only the just, but sinners, yet they rejected my bounty; they would not be saved, and now I give them over to you—to your infinite justice—punish them as you will" But, no! such feelings had no place in the Sacred Heart of Jesus. He prays for His enemies. He cries aloud: "Father, forgive!" Ah, then, what a grand triumphant cry breaks forth from the whole celestial choir, as the vail which had until now concealed the greatness of God's mercy was removed, and they beheld it in all its infinity! When God created the visible world, holy Job tells us that the angels rejoiced at the result of His goodness, power, wisdom, and benignity; joyous was also the "Gloria" which floated over the midnight air when Christ was born; but beyond all these was the hymn of praise which the angels intoned in gratitude for God's enduring mercy.

But Lucifer, and his fallen band retreat, and, frantic

with rage and despair, bury themselves in' the lowest depths of hell.

Then Jesus prays: "My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken Me?" He, as it were, suffers the never-ending pain which should be endured by every sinner, instead of by Him, the innocent Lamb of God. "I thirst." Jesus offers Himself for the salvation of every soul that has been, or ever will be born, until the end of time. He longs for it. He thirsts for it upon the gibbet of the cross. "It is consummated! Father, into thy hands I commend My spirit." The soul is about to leave that sacred body, the face assumes the livid hue of death; a soldier rushes up the mountain side and thrusts his spear into the Sacred Heart of Jesus; it opens, and, under the symbol of blood and water, rises from this precious wound the Holy Catholic Church. Even as from the side of the sleeping Adam, Eve came forth, so, from the heart of the heavenly Adam, as he fell asleep in death, there came forth this one true Church.

St. Peter compares her to the saving Ark. The very summits of the loftiest mountains were hidden beneath the surging waters of the deluge; from which we are to understand that, while God is willing to pardon man, He permits him to fall into an abyss of sin, such as no devil was ever guilty of. Lucifer, in his arrogant pride, said: "I will make myself like unto the Most High;" but St. Peter says in his first discourse on Pentecost: "But the Author of life you killed." *Deicide*—attempted *Deicide*—is the crime of the human

race against God. Oh, what a terrible crime! Yet, children of Adam, you still may hope. St. Paul says that Christ, in dying upon the cross, has destroyed sin through sin; which means that this atrocious crime, deicide, parricide, and fratricide combined, of which all sinners have been guilty—became for us, through God's infinite mercy, the very source of *Pardon!* This is the *infinite Triumph* of the Divine Mercy.

“But Thou, O Lord, what dost Thou require from us that we may participate in the fruits of redemption? Is it not meet that we should suffer even as you have suffered; for “if such things be done in the green wood, what shall be done in the dry?” Listen to the sweet and loving reply from the Sacred Heart of Jesus: “Nothing!”—“*Gratis redempti estis!*” “Nothing—you are redeemed.” So it is. And if one of the murderers of our Lord had fallen at the feet of St. Peter on Pentecost and asked the prince of the Apostles: “What penalty must I suffer for that horrible crime?” the answer would have been: “No penalty! Offer to your crucified Lord the sorrow of a truly contrite heart.” “I baptize thee; *ego te baptizo*,” and in the same moment the soul of that sinner would have been pure and bright as the fairest angel of heaven, through the merits of Christ the Saviour. And even if, later on, that ungrateful man should crucify anew, in his forgetful heart, the Son of God, even then I say he need not despair.

And upon what conditions may the baptized sinner hope for pardon? The very same which earthly justice

demands and requires to have a criminal delivered up to the law,—*Confession*. This self-accusation, joined to an act of sincere contrition, before the priest, as the representative of God, can rescue even the most abandoned sinner. This, beloved in Christ, is the triumph of the infinite mercy of God. The message which the Angel, on this auspicious day, brought to the Blessed Virgin Mary, reminds us of this glorious triumph, and three times a day does the Church recall it to our minds, with the wish that this threefold remembrance at morn, at noon, at eventide, should instill into our hearts a tender reverence and devotion for the great mystery which is commemorated by the feast we celebrate to-day. And with this devotion will spring up a feeling of the most intense gratitude to the Triune God, the Father who created us, the Son who redeemed us, and the Holy Ghost who sanctified us. Amen!

FEAST OF HOLY THURSDAY.

FIRST SERMON.

“It were better for him if that man had not been born.”—Matt, xxvi, 24.

THE Church observes the fast of Lent with the intention of preparing her children, in as perfect a manner as possible, for the glorious Easter-tide, that they may arise from a sinful, tepid, and imperfect state to a pure, holy, and even saintly life—a life most precious in the sight of the Lord. It is, therefore, the earnest wish of this most tender mother, that each of her children be penetrated with the greatest horror of sin, and, that every Christian, as he arises from the death of sin, shall also make fast the sepulcher of tepidity in which his soul has been for years, perhaps, buried. To this wish, and to the manner in which its realization can be accomplished, I will direct the attention of all whom I address during these three days of grace, asking them to consider with me the lives of three persons of whom Holy Scripture makes special mention in the history of the passion.

The first of the three is Judas, as he sat with the Lord at the Last Supper. Let us follow him until we behold him commit the dreadful crime which sealed his eternal ruin.

That the infinite merits of Christ may be effectually bestowed upon us, the first and most essential condition is, that we renounce sin entirely and forever, and thus, with hearts perfectly cleansed from the dust thereof, render ourselves worthy of the Table of the Lord, and thus, at this holy Easter-time, receive His precious Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity. A glance at Judas, the traitorous Apostle, will promote this condition of heart.

He is a mirror in which we may behold sin in all its depravity; in which every sinner, especially if he be a member of our Holy Church, may see reflected his own image, disfigured and distorted by the malignity of the crimes he has committed.

This will be made clear to you to-day,—the day, upon which, in ages long gone by, our loving Saviour bequeathed to us His sacred Body and Blood.

O Mary, refuge of sinners, obtain for us a perfect knowledge of our sins and the grace of true repentance, that we may make a sincere confession of all our offenses against the law of God!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, for the greater honor and glory of God!

Several circumstances conspired to render the sin of Judas so enormous, the first one of which was his *exalted* position. He had been selected from among the millions of men who had lived up to that period on earth, and who would live until the end of time,

to be constantly in the society of Jesus. Oh, what an honor! In proportion to it, therefore, his fall was immeasurably great.

Another serious aggravation of his crime was his *abuse* of the *graces* bestowed upon him to fit him for his vocation as one of the twelve Apostles,—one of the favored few who, for three years and a half, enjoyed the privilege of walking with the Saviour of mankind. He had, therefore, before him the most perfect example of virtue; he heard all His admirable discourses; witnessed His many miracles; beheld even the body of Lazarus, already touched with the blight of decay, arise at the word of the Lord, and yet all this was without effect!

Oh, what emptiness of heart! what an abuse of grace! For his sin there was no excuse!

The next aggravating circumstance was the terrible *indifference* of Judas. Christ, in order to watch over and rescue the soul of this ungrateful sinner, endeavored to win his love and awaken his interest by selecting him from the twelve Apostles as the one to whom He entrusted the care of His own temporal affairs and those of the other Apostles. As a mark of confidence, He gave into his charge the alms they received to procure the necessities of life. This gave him occasion to speak often with the Blessed Virgin Mary, who followed Jesus, with other holy women, to minister to the wants of the little band. And yet Judas remained cold and indifferent to all these proofs of the searching love of Christ for him. Unhappy wretch!

Thirdly, the sin of Judas was enormously aggravated by his astonishing *obduracy*. Even, though already guilty of the basest treason, he dared to place himself, with the rest of the Apostles, at the table of the Lord—the Last Supper! There Christ, elevating His voice, pronounced those awful words: “One of you is about to betray Me!” Awe-stricken, the disciples asked, in trembling tones: “Is it I, Lord?” Judas remained obdurate. And again the Son of God broke the deep silence, saying: “The Son of man indeed goeth, as it is written of Him: but woe to that man by whom He shall be betrayed; it were better for him if he had not been born.” Terrible sentence! Mighty enough to move the mountains to their very foundations, and to penetrate to the inmost recesses of the ocean caves! And still that obdurate heart remained untouched; nay, he even dared to ask: “Is it I?” Then the divine eyes of the dear Saviour rested with loving pity upon him, as He replied: “Thou hast said it!” Obdurate still, his heart closed to the softening influence of grace; he received the Body and Blood of Christ unworthily; and thus, for the first time, was the sacrilege of an unworthy communion committed, and in that moment Satan took possession of his heart!

Fourthly, the crime of Judas was enormously aggravated by the incredible *baseness* of the *treason*. To betray his Lord and Master—his Saviour, who had given him such testimonials of His love—for thirty pieces of silver, the price demanded for slaughtering a head of cattle!—Can more unprecedented baseness

be imagined? The enemies of Christ would gladly have paid him ten, fifty, a hundred times more for his most abominable treason had he but asked it. And with what bold assurance did he perpetrate the crime! He kissed the Saviour—the token of friendship to become the signal of treason! What greater hypocrisy can be imagined!

The last and most terrible characteristic of the crime of Judas was that *hardness* of heart which, culminating in despair, condemned him on the very day of redemption, when Christ gave Himself a willing sacrifice to die that he and all sinners might enter eternal life. This miserable being, unable to bear the weight of his crime, perished by his own vile hand!

Oh, horrible sin! Oh, incomprehensible atrocity! Yes, well might Christ declare that it were better for that man had he never been born.

O sinner, you who, while listening to my voice, endure the gnawings of that worm which never dies—the reproaches of a guilty conscience—do you not shudder at the picture of that monster who, chosen of Christ to be one of His dearest friends, betrayed his Lord, and then put an end to his own wretched life? He longed to escape from the night of despair which darkened his wretched life; but the refuge he found was the deepest, blackest pit in the abyss of hell! Oh, that the tree upon which the despairing suicide ended his days, and the halter which deprived him of his life, were here before you, that you might witness the agony and pain of the faithless Apostle

who betrayed the innocent Jesus! What a mirror of sin in all its blackest deformity! What a hideous reflection is therein presented! Sinner, do you not recognize it as your own? Do you not find it a perfect representation of your iniquitous soul? And O! may the grace of God so touch your hearts to-night that you repent, and tears entirely blot out that hideous image!

Many of you have, perhaps, heard an anecdote connected with a celebrated painting of the "Last Supper." One who had been a dear friend of the painter happened to offend him so deeply that the painter, in order to make him feel his wrath, in depicting the traitor Judas upon the canvass, gave to him the face of the friend whom he had loved so well. When the king, who had ordered the picture and was well aware of the recent enmity, first saw and examined it, he smiled, and, turning toward the knight, said: "Excellent, my lord; you are drawn to the very life!"—Yes, sinner, look at the picture of Judas; you, too, are drawn to the very life!

What increased the malignity of the sin of this traitorous Apostle was the *sublimity of his election*. Sinner, Christ has also chosen you from among the multitude of nations who have lived and are living still in the darkness of infidelity and heresy! You are a Catholic! Glorious dignity to which you have been elevated through the infinite mercy of God; and yet, through your own choice, by the commission of mortal sin, you became a child of Satan. Oh, what a deep and damning fall!

What also aggravated the guilt of Judas was his wanton abuse of the graces granted him by the Saviour, that he might live and die as became a worthy Apostle of the Lord.

What a multitude of graces, O sinner, has not God bestowed upon you through your call to the true Church? With what frequent instructions and encouragement *have you* been favored! how many confessions and holy communions have been vouchsafed to you! how many holy masses have you heard! and yet these graces have yielded no fruit! Oh, fatal instability of the human heart!

The treachery of Judas was aggravated by the manner in which he abused the grace of God. Imitate him not; but pause before it is too late!

Judas was coldly indifferent to that love which impelled the Son of God to go in search of him, that He might win a return of love. Sinner, you know how mercifully Divine Providence has followed you! how lovingly the Saviour has gone in quest of you! Take courage from the very fact of your having come hither to-night. It is an effect of the endearing love of the Good Shepherd, who longs to bring you once more to the protecting shelter of His fold. Oh, hide no longer; but meet that loving Guardian, and let Him guide you home.

What rendered the sin of Judas so terrible in its enormity was his shocking obduracy of heart. You, also, are guilty in this regard; for, although you have received all the graces with which he was favored, you

have also been endowed with many which were never bestowed on him. Judge, therefore, whether his obduracy was greater than yours.

Furthermore, Judas never had an opportunity of approaching the Sacrament of Penance. You enjoy that privilege; yet, perhaps, for years you have looked upon it with cold indifference, if not contempt. It may be that you have allowed years to pass without making a confession; or that, when you have attempted to blot out the sins of your life, you have but added to the long list of your crimes the damning guilt of sacrilege. And why, O sinner, is this? Because your heart refuses to give up its darling passions, and you continue to commit the same offenses as of yore. Judas did not, of himself, petition for the Holy Communion; while you have presumed to challenge the priest to open the tabernacle and place the Sacred Host upon your guilty tongue, that you may drag the Body of our Lord into the mire of your heart. When the agony of despair drove Judas to hang himself, he knew not of the prayer that went up that day from the Sacred Heart of Jesus on the cross: "Father, forgive!" Neither had he the example of the millions who, for nineteen centuries, have been guilty of grievous sin, yet repented and found grace, as *you* have ever before your eyes, O faithless child of the Church!

Judas betrayed his Lord but *once*, and upon that very day the grace of God forsook him and he perished miserably, while for *you* Christ has waited for years; and oh, for His dear sake—for the love of

Him who, for three and thirty years, suffered cold and hunger, contempt and derision, and, at last, a painful death on the cross—let Him not wait in vain!

The crime of Judas was increased by the unprecedented baseness of his selling his Divine Master for thirty pieces of silver; but is there not some sinner in this very Church whose darling passion is impurity? who would betray his Saviour for the gratification of the most shameful desires? Is there no drunkard listening to my words who, to gratify his depraved and vicious appetite for drink, would give, if not his own existence, why, then, the lives of his wife and little children? Yes, I say the lives of those whom he is bound to love and cherish, for he is slowly murdering them by his neglect! You, then, O drunkard, betray your Master for a price even more base than thirty pieces of silver! Yes, sinners, by your crimes—be they what they may—you have all betrayed Him over and over again for the basest considerations!

Judas betrayed the Son of man with a kiss—the token of friendship and love; and the faithless Catholic would fain pretend to be a friend—an adorer of Christ—while he crucifies Him by his interior life.

Judas yielded to despair and hanged himself; but, for the love of God and His blessed mother, I beseech you, poor sinners, let the resemblance between you and the wretched suicide stop before you yield to the temptation of despair! He forgot Mary! Had he hastened to her, and implored her to intercede with Jesus for him, she would, doubtless, have done

so, and Judas would have been saved. Do not imitate him in this forgetfulness of Mary. Fly to her; throw yourselves at the feet of the Mother of Mercy and refuge of sinners. Judas did not hear the words of Christ upon the cross: "Woman, behold thy Son; thy Child." You, beloved Christians, who have yielded to the tempter's voice, may listen to them in spirit and in faith.

O Mary, Mother of Mercy, grant to my fervent prayer a gracious answer, and obtain to-night for every Christian present here, who, listening to the tempter, has betrayed thy Son, the grace of sincere conversion, that in these days of grace he may be reconciled to God, and no longer be deaf to the voice of grace. Pray for him, O dearest Mother, that, when appalled at the weight of his sins, the demon of despair draws nigh, he may remember the dreadful fate of Judas, and fly for refuge to thy maternal love—the surest haven for all repentant souls. Amen!

.SECOND SERMON.

“Now, there was leaning on Jesus’s bosom one of His disciples, whom Jesus loved.”—John xiii, 23.

WE all know the four divisions of the day—midnight, day-break, noon, and eventide; and each of them is marked by a special divine fact which speaks in the most emphatic manner to the heart. At midnight Christ entered the world; He was born in a poor stable at Bethlehem; and in the birth of this little Infant we behold the coming of Him Who was the Expected and Desired of nations. At midday was raised aloft the cross by which He redeemed the world. At earliest dawn the Saviour, bursting the trammels of the grave, arose to life once more, and gave to the world a splendid proof of His divine power. But there remains an eventide, glorified indeed through the divine love of the Saviour, which led Him thereon to leave us the most precious, the most sweet, the most consolatory legacy that a God could bestow. It is the evening of Holy Thursday, when the Sacrifice of the New Law was instituted to bless the children of men. Where is the Christian who can speak or even think of this evening without the most holy sentiments of love arising in his heart as the scene of the Holy Paschal Table, round which Jesus and His disciples were seated, rises up before his spiritual view? What mighty love was that which impelled the Son of God to institute this Most Holy Sacrament, that He might remain

with us even to the consummation of the world! What a pledge of this faithful love! And, of all the Apostles, none more fully realized this than St. John, the disciple whom Jesus loved; and who, on that evening, enjoyed the privilege and happiness of being nearest the Lord at the Last Supper, and of leaning his head on the bosom of Jesus. In the whole course of his life St. John never forgot that evening. He styles himself the disciple whom Jesus loved, and to whom this great grace was granted; but gives us to understand that we also are permitted to participate therein in its plenitude, for he says expressly: "Those whom Jesus loved, He has loved until the end of time."

Yes, we may all, through the grace of Holy Communion, not only rest on the bosom of our Lord, but receive Him into our hearts.

That we may do so with the purity of soul and fervor of love which distinguished the communion of the beloved disciple, let us glance at him as he sat at the Paschal Table on this happy eve.

O Mary, obtain for us some portion of that ardent love which inflamed the heart of the beloved disciple toward thy divine Son!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, for the greater honor and glory of God!

To receive the Blessed Eucharist in as perfect a manner as St. John, depends, first, upon the preparation we make to approach the Table of the Lord; and, secondly,

on the manner in which we make use of His presence in our hearts, rendering to Him our gratitude after the example of St. John.

But, alas! with too many Christians, the first requisite is wanting. Even in the time of St. Paul, as the Epistle for to-day asserts, many of the faithful did not make due preparation, so that there were frequently communions which, if not unworthy, yielded but little spiritual fruit. St. Paul writes: "Therefore many among us sleep, because they do not judge themselves, before they approach the Table of the Lord, whether they are worthy to receive His Body and Blood;" from which we are to understand that, even if they were not in a state of sin, the coldness of their hearts, and the little degree of fervor they evinced, prevented them from deriving the benefits and graces which were poured forth upon St. John after his fervent reception of the Body and Blood of Christ. I said: "Even if they were not in a state of sin;" but, of course, if the sin were mortal, such a communion would not only be ineffectual, but a fearful sacrilege.

That our reception of the Holy Communion, therefore, may be indeed like that of the beloved disciple, it suffices not that we are free from the guilt of mortal sin; but we must leave nothing undone to cleanse our souls from the dust of venial sins and deliberate imperfections.

The ceremonies attendant upon the institution of the Most Holy Sacrament, as described by St. John, are a proof of this. Jesus washes the feet of all His

disciples; and our Lord's answer to St. Peter shows that this act is emblematic of the removal of every defect and imperfection from the soul. Therefore, did St. Peter exclaim: "Lord, not only my feet, but also my hands and my head." But even yet this is not the perfect preparation for Holy Communion. St. John was next to Jesus. This illustrates the ardor and fidelity with which he followed the Lord from the very moment he was called by Him. He was one of those three highly-favored Apostles who were permitted to be in the closest proximity to Jesus, and who enjoyed the privilege of beholding Jesus in His transfiguration on Mt. Tabor; and, even among those three, he was the only one who followed Him to Calvary, and beheld Him on the cross.

This feature in the life of St. John—"the disciple whom Jesus loved"—should awaken in us the desire and resolution to make the most earnest efforts to please God, and so become more and more like that Divine Model, and, like St. John, to be faithful unto death.

But the generality of Christians care not to follow the admonition of Christ: "Be ye perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect;" and here we can find the cause of so many tepid and fruitless communions. Should any one ask why we feel so little fear of venial sins and trifling imperfections, I would say: As the fervent love of St. John is wanting, so also are the hunger and thirst of his heart after sanctity, lacking in the hearts of many who go forward to receive the Body

and Blood of Christ. Whosoever loveth truly, my dear brethren, avoids every thing, great or little, that might grieve or offend the beloved object; and the more ardent the love, the more earnest the effort to please. St. Paul tells us, in the most explicit manner, that there is no communication between light and darkness, between Christ and Satan, between heaven and hell.

The very ceremonies made use of in the administration of Holy Communion show how essential to its worthy reception is a repentant heart; for the Church has prescribed that the "Confiteor" be recited aloud, so that every communicant may make another act of sorrow for the most venial imperfection which rests upon his soul before he opens his lips to welcome the Lord of heaven and earth into his heart. But what urges us on and strengthens us to emulate the saints in their zealous imitation of Jesus is *love*. "The love of Christ urges us," cries out the Apostle.

But many Christians are wanting in this divine virtue; and thus it became necessary to proclaim that precept, the very existence of which should be considered a reproach by the lukewarm children of the Church: "Thou shalt receive the Blessed Eucharist at least once a year."

O dearest Christians! the soul of a St. John, burning with ardent love for God, required no such command. He hungered and thirsted after that divine food as the heart panteth after the fountains of water. St. Catherine of Sienna, frequently said to her confessor: "Father, I am hungry."

When this love consumes our hearts, the second condition necessary to receive all those graces and blessings, conferred by a worthy reception of Holy Communion, will not be wanting—*thanksgiving*.

But if it be a sad truth that many approach the Table of the Lord without due preparation, it is equally to be lamented that a still greater number receive the Body of Christ and turn away without a word.

This was not the case with St. John. Judas received Holy Communion, and his soul was instantly enshrouded in the deepest gloom of a night wherein there glimmered not the faintest ray of hope; and, after having received it from the hands of the Lord Himself, he arose, and rested not until the purchase-money, for which he had betrayed the loving Redeemer, was clutched fast in his avaricious hand! What a contrast! St. John, absorbed in love and joy, can find no words to express his gratitude.

Yes, Judas is also a type of those who receive Holy Communion without a sigh of thanksgiving. With the cold hand of despair clutching his treacherous heart, he leaves the abode of love and peace, and rushes away to satisfy his greed for gold! Behold these models of a worthy and an unworthy communion, and consider well which one shall be your choice!

Yet Judas is not to serve merely as a warning to the unworthy communicant; but also to those who, after receiving, plunge directly into the stir of worldly affairs and schemes to increase their wealth. Alas, that temporal interests should so soon draw them away from

Jesus! We may well be astonished, and exclaim, with St. John Chrysostom: "How can it be possible that Christ becomes so soon indifferent to you, that you can devote but a few brief moments to render to Him acts of adoration, praise, and thanksgiving for a grace so infinitely great, for a happiness so exquisite as to render man an object of envy even to the angels, and for which a lifetime of thanksgiving would not be sufficient!"

And if, my brethren, you again ask whence arises this neglect, I would again reply: From a want of that *love* which burned in the heart of St. John. Those who love, long to be with the object of their love. When blessed Armella, whose dearest joy it was to spend hours and hours before the Blessed Sacrament, even when she had not the happiness of receiving Holy Communion, was asked why she did so, replied: "Because I love." And, beloved in Christ Jesus, by frequently visiting Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament we will grow ever in the love and knowledge of Him.

St. John knew and loved Him in a greater degree than the other Apostles, because he was always nearest Him; and, at the Last Supper, his resting-place was the Sacred Heart.

Obtain for us, therefore, we beseech thee, St. John, some faint reflection of the ardent fire of thy love, that we may, by lives modeled upon thy own, show our gratitude and love to God; and, when we approach the Table of the Lord, may we taste the happiness which filled thy heart when thou didst receive the Body and Blood

of Christ. Then will we, while still on earth, already taste the bliss of heaven, to which celestial joy the Church refers when she prays: "Lord, grant that we may forever rejoice in the delight of Thy Divine Majesty, which a worthy reception of Thy Body and Blood will afford us even here below."—Amen!

THIRD SERMON.

“My soul is sorrowful even unto death.”—Mark xiv, 34.

HOLY THURSDAY evening places before our eyes in an especial manner two circumstances in the life and sufferings of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. The one picture portrays Christ at the Last Supper with His disciples, where, by the institution of the Most Holy Sacrament, He gave Himself unto us for all time, even to the consummation of the world. What a wonderfully sublime spectacle was that presented by our Lord and Saviour when, for the first time, He changed bread and wine into His Body and Blood! He raised His eyes to heaven and established the Sacrifice of the New Law, then administered Holy Communion to the assembled apostles.

Holy Church teaches us through her prayers in honor of the Blessed Sacrament, that Christ instituted it as a perpetual commemoration of His precious passion and death; the sufferings preceding which began more immediately in the garden of Gethsemane when, at the very thought of the bitter anguish He was in a few short hours to endure, and the certainty that, in spite of it all, millions and millions would be lost, a bloody sweat burst forth from every pore and bathed the ground whereon He knelt.

The passion and death of Christ have consummated for us the work of Redemption, but if we wish to derive the benefits which arise therefrom in all their plen-

itude, we must, as Christ so often and so solemnly assured His disciples, be willing to bear and suffer patiently whatever sorrows He pleases to send us to try our faith and love in this world, and to intensify the glory of our triumph with Christ in heaven. And that we may be enabled to do this, let us glance at Him, "the Light of the world," "treading the wine-press" alone on this mournful night of grief and pain.

Let us glance at Christ, the Sun of consolation, in the gloomy night of earthly suffering—of death, and finally the Sun triumphantly reigning in the kingdom of eternal bliss in the joyous feast of Easter.

O Mary, Mother of mercy, Mother of sorrows, who stood beneath the cross, the Queen of martyrs, obtain from thy divine Son for us the grace to suffer patiently for His dear sake!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, for the greater honor and glory of God!

"Man born of a woman, liveth for a short time, and is filled with many miseries," says holy Job, and experience teaches us the truth of this; Holy Scripture confirms it; so that it were folly indeed to doubt. Of the millions who have lived and died since the creation of the world, not one has been exempt from trouble. Scarce has the little child, be he prince or peasant, looked out upon a world both new and strange, than a feeble wail betokens pain or dread. And life goes on; the child becomes a man, and at last the hour of

death comes—that hour in which even the mightiest potentate, before whose will his trembling subjects bowed in dread, must bend to the will of a Sovereign mightier far. He must leave the world, and the death struggle will be full of pain, for this is a valley of tears.

Many circumstances conspire to this. Care for the preservation of our lives, care to provide for those whom God has given to us,—and this, as many among you, my dearest Christians, know full well, is often a difficult task, for the means of doing so are wanting, and employment can not be had.

Bodily pain and severe illness often render life miserable. Sights and insults, whether real or fancied, deserved or unmerited, have the same effect. But what can I say of those pangs inflicted by a guilty conscience—that worm which never dies? When the fiercest temptations attack the soul, and man beholds his salvation exposed to the greatest danger; when he stands all alone, with no one to whisper words of trust in God, then, indeed, this earth seems like a valley of tears. Yet let us thank our Lord that we possess the light of faith, which is brilliant enough to penetrate the most impenetrable gloom. Let us ascend the Mount of Olives and see what an agonizing God can bear; and behold, amid all the grief and woe and sorrow which well-nigh crushed that loving heart, the glory of a divinity which rose so far above the pain that the wailing cry, “Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from me,” was at once followed by the submissive cry, “Yet not as I will, but as Thou wilt.”

Among the many rays which emanate from the Sun of justice on Mount Olivet there are five of an especial luster, which will lighten the sorrows of life and strengthen us to unite our sorrows with those of Christ.

We have reached the summit of the Mount; now let us glance devoutly at our suffering Lord. The *first* ray upon our hearts is full of consolation. The thought, the assurance of faith, the certainty that affliction is *no misfortune*, but, on the contrary, that to suffer in union with the most holy will of God is a happiness for which the angels might indeed envy us, should teach us to say, "Thy will be done." Suffering thus endured is a most precious opportunity to show the extent, fidelity, and sincerity of our love to God. If He shower blessings upon us and enrich us with temporal favors, we can indeed say: "My God, I love Thee—I thank Thee." But if His divine hand press heavily upon us, and we bow in humble submission to His will, then may we know that our love is real and true, and we can justly say: "My God, I love Thee. I suffer willingly for Thee. I thank Thee with all my heart."

The angels never had this sublime opportunity of proving their love for God, and they envy us, for they fain would suffer for Him Who of His own free will took upon Himself sufferings which far exceeded the most intense pain that had been or would be borne by man to the end of time, as we know from the bloody sweat which burst from the Saviour's veins.

Jesus chose to suffer. He could certainly have redeemed us by a single petition of His Sacred Heart, but it pleased the heavenly Father and His eternal Son to bestow, through suffering, the benefits of Redemption; "for," says a Christian thinker of modern times, "had there been a more glorious way than to suffer innocently through pure love, the Father would have manifested it to His Son rather than that He should endure such anguish." The words of Holy Scripture verify it: "O all ye that pass by the way, attend and see if there be any sorrow like unto My sorrow." Therefore Jesus longed with such an intense longing for this suffering that He sighed forth: "I must be baptized with a baptism of blood." Oh, how He yearned for the consummation of His passion! O Christian, when the waves of affliction sweep over your soul, think of all this and be consoled, for Jesus loves you.

The *second* ray which lightens the sorrowful heart, as it glances at the agonizing Saviour on Mount Olivet, proceeds from the thought: "This trouble which rends my very soul is not from the hand of man, but of *God*. No angel sent it to me, no devil brought it nigh." "Shall I not drink," says Christ, speaking of His passion, "the cup which my Father presents to me?" And again: "Not a hair falls from your head without the will of your Father who is in heaven." What a consolation! *God*, my *Creator*—He, the infinite goodness, wisdom, and love—ordains or permits me to suffer, that I may show the sincerity of my love

and prove its depth! Think of this, and the ray of consolation will so penetrate your hearts that you will embrace the cross with loving zeal.

As we glance for the third time at the Saviour prostrated in agony and bathed in His own sacred blood, a *third* ray of light shines forth and brightens with celestial hope the troubled night of the soul. Are you more innocent than He, the Lamb of God, Who taketh away the sins of the world? Had you but committed one sin in the course of your whole life, all the sufferings on earth would not be sufficient reparation for it; and do you not feel that you have been guilty of many, perhaps, mortal and most grievous sins, for which you fully deserved to be cast into the flames of hell? And even if you have not the stain of mortal sin upon your souls, think of Purgatory! Suffer patiently, for thus you will lessen the pains you might have to endure in that fiery prison, and shorten the duration of the punishment which may await you there.

By the royal road of the cross Christ your Saviour entered heaven. His blessed Mother and all the saints walked in the steps His sacred feet marked with His precious blood. Look up to that glorious army. You do not suffer alone, for, as St. Paul tells us, through sorrow and tribulation do we enter the kingdom of heaven. And *you*, beloved in Christ Jesus, would you wish to enter there by any other than the royal road of suffering? You may say that the path is too narrow, the thorns too sharp, and sigh after the broad and pleasant road fragrant with lovely flowers and

cooled by fountains whose waters dance and sparkle in the sun; but, for the love of God, resist the wish to walk therein, for the roses have piercing thorns, and from the sparkling waters, as you stop to quench your thirst, spring deadly serpents whose venomous sting brings death.

And then, my friends, if you were told that, by passing through a narrow and dangerous road, you would find a princely fortune, would you not persevere until the end? Oh, persevere in the narrow road which leads to eternal life, where a bliss which can not be conceived is in store for you—where a happiness beyond comparison awaits the faithful soul!

The *fourth* ray which falls upon the troubled and dejected heart, from the Sun of justice, and gilds with celestial hope the night of the soul, is the thought: "The more we endure for God, through pure love of Him, the more exquisite will be our *bliss* in heaven." There God will reward us for faithfully practising those virtues so repugnant to human nature; for the Holy Ghost, speaking through St. James, says that patience hath a perfect work. Wherefore? We may easily perceive the reason. All theological and moral virtues are contained in the exercise of this admirable virtue. Truly, an act of patience is the most glorious manner of practising faith, hope, and charity, and every moral virtue; for trials borne with patience rigidly test the strength of our humility, self-denial, and the four cardinal virtues—Prudence, Justice, Temperance, and Fortitude—without which there is no true virtue.

Since, then, the only object for which we have been placed on earth is to gain merits for heaven, what comfort must we not find in the thought that trials and troubles come from God, and that every affliction patiently endured will turn to a brilliant gem to adorn our heavenly crown.

In conclusion, the *fifth* ray of brilliant light which comes from the Sun of justice, and cheers our fainting spirits is the thought that the longest suffering here on earth *is but brief*. The passion of Christ was brief. It lasted but from one evening until the next, and soon He entered the joy of the Lord, the eternal bliss of heaven. The longest life is short compared to eternity. Could man, through one breath of affliction, merit joys for his whole life, and if that life could last a thousand years, nevertheless one breath would be infinitely longer in comparison to a thousand years than would a life of a thousand years be in regard to eternity.

But a little while, O sorrowful hearts! St. Peter says, the afflicted shall rejoice in joy inexpressible. Do you hear these blessed words? In your deep desolation and abandonment of soul go to Mount Olivet and prostrate yourselves near your suffering Saviour, and the lovely radiance of those five celestial rays will cast their consoling light upon your grief and cheer your darkened lives. Then, through Christ, the Sun of justice, the Risen Lord, will your night of sorrow be merged in the brightness of spiritual joy, through which you will reach the eternal day.—Amen!

FEAST OF GOOD FRIDAY.

FIRST SERMON.

“Now there stood by the cross, Mary His mother.”—John xix, 25.

YESTERDAY, beloved in Christ, the example of Judas the traitor was held up to us as a terrible warning upon which every sinner might meditate, and, perhaps, realize the consequences of such total atrocity and utter hardness of heart. That warning might be, for many, the very last grace vouchsafed by God! Oh, may it not be in vain! What reason has not the sinner to strike his breast, and cry out: “O God, be merciful to me, for my sins have been as great, perhaps, as those of Judas, and more frequent!” Yes, sinners, it is even so; for Judas, wretch though he was, did not try to pervert his fellow-laborers, the Apostles; while *you*, how many innocent souls have you not led astray, both by word and example? How many souls, most dear and precious to the Heart of Jesus, have you not turned away from Him? “Woe to him by whom scandals come. It were better for that man that a millstone be hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depths of the sea.” And yet, my brethren, if, among my hearers there are any who have been guilty of grievous sin, I would say to

them, do not despair. Even though each passing year has witnessed the commission of crimes, each one more terrible than the last; nay, even if you have lived as an incarnate devil, do not despair. Look upon Mary beneath the cross. Call upon her; she will take you under her maternal protection; lead you to her divine Son, who can refuse her nothing; and obtain for you the grace of a true conversion; for is she not the one chosen by God, and destined to be the Mother of mercy, the refuge of sinners?

As the subject of our present meditation, my dear brethren,—

Let us consider the wonderful power contained in the words uttered by Jesus on the cross, those seven last words which inspired the sweet heart of the Virgin Mother with an ardent wish to save and rescue sinners.

O Mary, Mother of mercy, show thyself a merciful mother, especially towards those erring children, who have come here to-night, their hearts heavy with the burden of sin!

I speak in the holy name of Jesus, for the greater honor and glory of God!

As it seemed good to the Lord to place a help-mate by the side of the earthly Adam, so we behold at the side of Jesus, the heavenly Adam, Mary, the Eve of the New Law; that, as by the fall of the first Adam and Eve the whole human race was plunged into an abyss of woe, so through the second—Jesus

and Mary—rescued man was led to hope for heaven. It is true that, in the abstract, it was the merits of Christ alone which effected our redemption, yet, that its fruits might be imparted to man individually, Jesus was pleased to place by his side a mother—Mary—for the consolation and assistance of the human race.

Jesus *merited*; Mary *distributes* those merits. Therefore, God filled her heart with the most fervent affection for us, who have been born in sin, ensnared by numberless temptations, walking in the path to heaven, it may be, but in constant danger of going astray, and persecuted by the enemies of our salvation who rejoice when we make but one false step, hoping thereby that we will become their prey forever. Mary's heart is filled with the most unspeakable compassion for us; and no mother, of her own natural inclination, so fondly loves a child, so tenderly cares for its welfare, so untiringly watches over it in every danger, as does Mary in regard to the children of men; especially if they have had the happiness of receiving baptism as members of the Holy Catholic Church. "Come ye all to me, and be filled with my fruits." Thus does Holy Church cry out to those who zealously walk under her protection and patronage in the way of perfection, the path which leads to the joys of heaven.

But with far more earnestness and devotion does this exclamation come forth from the mother of love and mercy to every soul that has fallen into sin. "Come back," this tender mother cries: "forsake your sinful lives, and live for God." The reason why

the Saviour placed His mother beneath the cross is given by St. Bonaventure, in the following touching words: "Divine mercy was pleased to place beneath the world's redeeming wood, a creature who would be wholly merciful, and her name is Mary." Jesus did so that no sinner need ever despair, that no soul need be lost. St. Bernard says: "You dare not go to Christ because you have crucified Him, and, besides, He will one day be your Judge; but look at Mary, hasten to her; she is all mercy. In her, so tender, kind, and loving, there is nothing at which you could take alarm. She is a *mother* who will lead you to her Son; who will reconcile you through that precious blood He shed upon the cross, to His eternal Father." Mary herself gave the same assurance to St. Bridget in a vision: "There is no sinner so great," she said, "who, when he calls upon me and comes to me, will be cast off, and refused forgiveness." During the earthly life of the Blessed Virgin, her heart burned with the desire to lead souls to Christ.

Oh, with what joy did she behold them return to the path of virtue after they had strayed therefrom, and to a life of sanctity after they had abandoned their evil ways! But, beloved in Christ, how immeasurably was this desire increased when she stood so near her dying Son, and heard the words uttered by His parched and livid lips:

"Father, forgive them; they know not what they do," were the first precious words which welled up from the agonizing heart. The mother listened, and

resolved to make it her dearest care to lead the sinner back to God, that the blood of Jesus might not be shed in vain. "O my Jesus!" was the prayer she put forth to her crucified Son, "I know well that for love of souls Thou didst choose this painful death, to deliver them from the curse of sin; therefore, I unite my petition to Thine, and cry with Thee: Heavenly Father, forgive! Receive my only-begotten Son; I offer Him to Thee with all His merits, together with my own, which I have gained by Thy divine grace, or may merit until the end of my life. Have mercy, I beseech Thee, upon the sinful children of men!"

"Amen I say unto thee; this day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise."

Mary listened, and still her desire for the salvation of souls increased; for her compassionate heart shuddered at the terrible torments into which those who were lost would be plunged. And in proportion to the number saved by the life, death, and passion of Christ, will the glory and beatitude of the Sacred Heart be increased in heaven.

"Woman, behold thy son; son, behold thy mother."

How precious are the words which fall from the dying lips of a beloved friend!

How much dearer are they when it is an only son. Mary listened, and the wish of her heart grew still more intense, as the Saviour spoke, to save every soul. By these words He solemnly declared before heaven and earth that to Mary He bequeathed the children of Adam, that she might, through her intercession, aid

in their salvation with the love, tenderness, and magnanimity which has marked her love for Him. And can we doubt that the sorrowful mother promised to do so? And the blood, which gushed from the five sacred wounds, fell upon her there, thus sealing the solemn promise she made to Christ.

“My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken Me?”

Mary understood the meaning of this complaint. Christ suffered, as it were, the punishment of separation from God, incurred on account of sin; but what more than all afflicted His heart, was the knowledge, that in spite of that blood He so freely shed for man amid temptations, trials, afflictions, and intense pain, for so many it would be shed in vain.

“I thirst!” It was not sufficient for the Saviour to deliver us from the curse of sin, but He would fain induce us to imitate His example, though life itself might be the penalty. Mary heard and understood the plaintive cry, and her wish grew stronger still to win souls for heaven, and console the Sacred Heart.

“It is consummated!” The work of redemption is finished, and Jesus leaves this world with the words: “Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit.” “Behold the completion of the work for which Thou didst send me here.”

This perseverance unto the end is the perfect fulfillment of the divine will; but it is a grace which, in reality, not one of the saints in heaven who reached that happy home thereby merited of *himself*; but as Holy Scripture tells us, and the holy fathers unani-

mously assert, a solid and tender devotion to Mary is a certain sign of election. "Whosoever finds Me finds life, and draws salvation from the Lord," says the Holy Ghost, through the Church, in reference to the ever blessed Virgin Mary.

"Father, into Thy hands I commend My Spirit." With the most implicit confidence may her devoted clients, as this world recedes from their dying eyes, breathe forth the prayer which the Saviour uttered on the cross.

When St. John of God was dying, suddenly there appeared to him the pure and loving Mother of Jesus at the very moment that he had ceased to hope for that favor. But Mary, who had promised to be there, sweetly said to this faithful servant: "My dear son I never forsake my children in this solemn hour." O sinners, do not lose courage, hasten to Mary, call upon her, seek her assistance, and she will help you to make a good confession! Draw from her bleeding heart those seven swords of grief which your sins have thrust therein,—the sword of delay in conversion, of impenitence, of scandal, of indifference in matters of religion, of disdain towards the Church and her ministers.

Judas forgot to call upon her. O sinners, for Christ's dear sake forget not so sure a refuge, who is ready to help, who longs to save your souls!

O Mary, with St. John we sink down at thy feet, even as if, with Him, thy adopted Son, we were now on Calvary, and cry out from the very depths of our

contrite hearts: "O Mother of mercy, be merciful unto us, by the memory of those sorrows which thou didst endure upon the sacred mount. Obtain for us the grace of true contrition of heart, a life free from sin, and a happy death through Jesus Christ, our crucified Lord and Redeemer.—Amen!

SECOND SERMON.

“And when Jesus saw His Mother and the disciple whom He loved, He said: Behold thy Mother,”—St. John xix, 26.

YESTERDAY we considered St. John, the disciple of love; and his beautiful example pointed out to us, in the clearest manner, the conditions necessary for approaching the Table of the Lord, so as to partake of the heavenly food in a worthy manner; and, after its reception, to unite ourselves so intimately with Christ that our reception of the Holy Communion may be indeed like that of St. John, and produce in our souls the same effects of sanctifying love. To-day the scene is changed.

Let us glance at him as he stands beneath the cross, beside Mary, the Mother of fair love, and learn no less expressly the conditions upon which we, ransomed sons of men, through the passion and death of Christ, may reap the fruits of the Redemption in their fullness for time and eternity.

To-day also his characteristic feature, as disciple of love, exemplifies these conditions. And why?

Because the more sincere our love for Jesus, the more perfectly will our hearts be prepared to appropriate these fruits; and, from the wounds of our crucified Saviour to receive, without intermission, new distributions of grace.

O Mary, who, under the cross, didst adopt St. John as thy son, adopt us to-day in like manner as thy chil-

dren, and obtain for us that love for Jesus which filled his fervent heart!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, for the greater honor and glory of God!

If yesterday we beheld in spirit St. John at the Holy Table resting upon the Sacred Heart of Jesus, we learned also how fully he merited, above all the other Apostles, the title, "disciple of love." And, on this day, so sad, so full of mournful memories, and yet replete with consolation too, we perceive that again he is favored, above all the other Apostles, in being allowed to stand by the Mother of Jesus beneath the *cross*. Oh, that *we* all would avail ourselves of the privilege of being near Jesus—present in the Blessed Sacrament—by visiting and receiving the Son of God!

The fervent love which inflamed the heart of St. John shows us at once what will render our intercourse with Jesus like unto his. And now the love, which burned so brightly amid the spiritual joys of that holy eventide, retains its ardor toward the crucified One in all the desolation of this bitter hour. It glowed in the faithful heart of St. John on Calvary, and exercised a sublime influence upon the holiness of his after life.

To understand better what kind of affections they were which rendered St. John so dear and precious to his suffering Saviour, let us glance first at Mary—the Mother of Sorrows, the Queen of Martyrs, and the type of all that is holy and beautiful in love—and

think of the sentiments which filled her maternal heart as she endured each separate pain inflicted on her beloved Son, for it found its echo *there*. And *these* affections were mirrored in the dear disciple's faithful heart, causing Jesus to give, before He left this world, His loving Mother an affectionate son. And what *were* the feelings of this blessed Mother in that solemn hour, when she beheld the consummation of what had begun some three and thirty years before? *Compassion, adoration, thanksgiving*, and perfect *resignation* to the most holy will of God.

Ah, yes! *compassion*. The sight of a poor body covered with wounds, bruised, and bleeding, always awakens it, especially if the sufferer be the innocent victim of malice; and this feeling is intensified if he be connected with us by the ties of love or blood. Imagine, then, the feelings of a loving mother when her darling child lies wounded or dying in her arms!

During one of my missions the following painful illustration of this came under my personal observation: Two children—two innocent little children—were at play in the yard near by their dwelling, where an elder brother was splitting wood. Unfortunately, the stroke of the axe fell on the hand of the little golden-haired boy of five—the youngest of the three. The hand was almost completely severed from the wrist, and was kept thereon only by a slender piece of skin. Horrified, the brothers carried the little one to his mother, who gave one look and fell fainting on the floor. Judge, then, of the grief of the Blessed

Virgin, who possessed the feelings of a loving mother in the highest degree.

And yet, with the sharp sword of sorrow piercing her heart, she stood calmly by, and thought of the priceless value of those sufferings which Jesus underwent. She, who bore so large a part in the redemption of man—Queen of Apostles, and seat of divine wisdom—adored the decree of God, which was completed through the passion and death of Christ, that through the sufferings of a God mankind should be redeemed.

Mary's heart was full of *adoration* combined with *gratitude* for her own election as Mother of the Redeemer. Gratitude that she was permitted to stand by the cross and nearest to Him. She thanked God that she was permitted to unite her sufferings with those of her divine Son; and that unto her was given to be mediatrix between Him and the human race. She bowed in meek *submission*, saying, as first she did in Nazareth: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done unto me according to Thy word." Thus prayed the Mother of God, even while the shadow of the cross was darkening her future life, and the sword of grief, which Simeon promised, pierced through her very heart.

And in all this St. John, the beloved disciple, was her counterpart. He felt the most tender pity when looking up at the dying Saviour, now truly the Man of Sorrows. What a change in Him since the evening of the Last Supper, that Holy Repast, the intense

joy of which could never be forgotten, and which proved the sweetest solace in the anguish of the present hour! There the Son of God appeared the most beautiful among the children of men; now, the glory was dimmed, and there was no comeliness in Him. St. John was also deeply grateful for having been chosen by Christ to walk by His side through life, to stand by Him in death. He, too, made the sacrifice of his own will, as the Blessed Mother did. Compassion, adoration, gratitude, and submission!

We, too, can participate in these affections; and we must do so, if we would share to the full extent in the merits of Jesus's death.

But will it suffice to stop at mere *feeling*? So far from it, that to think so would be one of the greatest illusions, and must be severely guarded against; for St. John tells us that we must love, not in words alone, but in deeds. That our love for the crucified One may prove itself as true, sacrificing, and faithful as that of St. John, let us keep ever in view the words spoken by Him upon the cross, which, falling upon the ear of affection strained to catch even the faintest whisper of his beloved Lord, illumined the soul of St. John for the rest of his life, and guided him in the way of salvation with their beautiful light.

Let us apply them to ourselves, and imagine that Jesus addresses us thus:

"Souls redeemed by Me at the cost of such bitter anguish, if you love Me, sin no more; but profit by these my sufferings, and aim for the joys of heaven."

Ah, yes! my dearest brethren! when pleasure's seducing cup is held to your lips, and you can not quaff therefrom without committing sin, pause then, and think of the weary years of pain which Jesus spent on earth! Think of that life of toil and trial crowned in the latter years by suffering and anguish such as the mind could never conceive, and an ignominious death, and all for you! Think of this, friends, and dash the poisoned cup away!

Yes, it was sin which crucified your Saviour; and St. John grieved over the slightest shadow of evil which might have fallen on his soul; but we may well believe that, after he listened to the words: "Father, forgive," his beautiful soul was never stained with the smallest fault.

"Amen, I say to thee; this day thou shalt be with Me in paradise." To St. John was granted the wonderful privilege of beholding the glories of heaven while yet on earth. Detach your hearts from the empty treasures of this world; for, if you would arise with Christ, seek first the things which are of Christ.

"Woman, behold thy son." "Son, behold thy Mother." St. John heard the words; he glanced at Mary, drew nearer, and threw himself at her feet beneath the cross. Then he embraced his adopted Mother with all the fervor of filial love. My dear brethren, show your love to Jesus by a tender devotion and love to Mary. Love her with a truly filial love; for Christ, according to St. Bridget and other spiritual

writers, has given, in the person of St. John, the entire human race to Mary as her children.

“My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken Me?” Man’s life is a warfare; and, at times, it seems indeed as if we were entirely forsaken. Let us, then, like St. John, be ready to suffer every thing, and to give up our very lives rather than commit one single venial sin.

Look, with the beloved disciple, at Jesus, the crucified One, and you will conquer and overcome.

“I thirst.” St. John listened. Jesus thirsts after souls, and this favored Apostle understood the mournful cry. And do you not think that he promised the Lord, as a true disciple, to spread His kingdom, and to labor for the salvation of souls, the value of which he saw more clearly in that solemn hour when he witnessed the incalculable cost of their redemption?

Try, beloved in Christ Jesus, to imitate him in his zeal for the rescue of human souls.

“It is consummated.” Fidelity to the very end is the most convincing proof of true love, which “many waters can not quench,” as Holy Scripture affirms. Be faithful, then, O Christians, whose salvation has been purchased at such a price; and, for love of Him whose sufferings we commemorate to-night, falter not, but persevere until the last. And then when that awful day will dawn, which hath for you no night, or that evening twilight fall, of which you will never see the morn, with perfect hope you can sigh: “Come, my Jesus, come,” and yield up your spirit in the affections

of your faithful love to Him with the longing desire of St. John, and the holy confidence of St. Francis Xavier. Ah, yes! then you may well cry out: "I have loved and trusted in Thee, O my God, and will therefore never be confounded. I die in Thy blessed arms, O Jesus, my Crucified Love."—Amen!

THIRD SERMON.

“O death, where is thy sting?”—1 Cor. xv, 55.

IF I, dearly beloved in Christ Jesus, have meditated with you upon the manifold miseries which drape our lives with the sable hue of gloom, I have also reminded you how Christ, the luminous Sun of justice, shines even amid this mournful night and brightens it with the most consoling rays of hope. There is, however, a still greater likeness between a dark and starless night and the condition of the departing soul. Oh, how terrible is the darkness which overshadows it at the approach of that moment which is to witness the separation of the soul from that body to which it has been so long and so intimately united—when it must depart alone, and, uncheered by the companionship of even one earthly friend, enter on a path all new and strange, “the house of its eternity!” The sight leaves the dim and fading eyes, and night comes for that dying man, although the sun’s bright glow may fill the room. But, alas! the shadows fall deeper still when despair sets in, and envelop the departing soul in a night of desolation and woe.

Yes, even to God’s saints has it been given to walk through the dark valley of bitter agony before they could enter the joys of heaven. The great St. Hilary trembled when his death hour approached, thinking of the words of St. Paul: “It is terrible to fall into the hands of the living God;” but, taking courage, he ex-

claimed: "What! You have served God for seventy years, and now are afraid to appear before Him. Fear not, my soul, but go forth to meet your God;" and so he departed, full of holy hope.

Would you also, my brethren, be blessed with the sweet confidence of St. Hilary at the hour of death? It is in your power—

For what animates the dying Christian who has faithfully served his Lord, is a glance at the crucifix which is placed in his hands; for Christ is the Sun which brightens the dark hour of death.

O Mary, Mother of a happy passage, as the twilight of life gathers over our souls, assist us by thy prayers, that our eyes may uncloseth upon the eternal day!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, for the greater honor and glory of God!

As we read in the lives of the holy fathers in the desert, who lived in their little cells in Egypt, it came to pass that an Abbot of great renown lay on his dying bed. His spiritual children, who loved and revered him for his wonderful sanctity, gathered from far and near to witness that edifying death and pray for the departing soul. The face of the dying man was illumined with divine love as he uttered distinctly the words: "Behold, the choir of patriarchs approaches to meet me." The hermits, in awe, remained silent, and ventured not to speak; when, after a short pause, there fell upon the listening group an exultant cry: "Behold, the

venerable prophets are coming to meet me.”—After a brief silence his countenance became still more brilliant as, lifting up his voice, he exclaimed: “The apostles of Christ are here, and wish to bear me away to heaven.”—Another interval of silence; the lips of the venerable servant of God moved again; and on being asked with whom he was conversing, he replied: “The angels are here, and wish me to go with them, that they may introduce me to the joys of heaven; but I ask them to leave me here still longer, that I may perform more penance for my sins.” One of the fathers then said: “Venerable Abbot, you do not need to do longer penance.”—And behold, his face shone as if he were in an ecstasy of delight, and he cried: “Jesus my Saviour cometh!” and with these words the lovely dawn of a happy eternity broke upon his soul, as it went forth to dwell forever with God.

My dearest Christians, a similar halo of consolation may one day irradiate your dying bed, if you be but faithful, when Christ the Lord, not only in vision, but with body and soul, divinity and humanity, comes to your hearts. The priest will administer to you the Sacred Host as viaticum before you go to receive the reward of a well-spent life.

This blessed assurance which I give you, however, from this holy place, can not be offered to every dying person, but only to such as have believed and hoped and loved during life, and who have observed all the commandments of God and of His Church. Even they, as I said before, may in their last agony, by the per-

mission of God, feel a great interior desolation for their greater purification, that they may enter at once into everlasting bliss.

We have considered the trials which, from the cradle to the grave, are the lot of man, in my discourse of yesterday, and beheld the five rays which come from the sorrowful heart of the agonizing Jesus, to encourage us amid these trials and troubles, and also in the many and violent temptations which will encompass the soul.

In the terrors of death's dark night, my dear brethren, there will be seven consoling rays in the seven words which Jesus spoke upon the cross, and of those I will speak to-night.

"Father, forgive." This is the first ray which illumines the night of death for the faithful child of the Church. It is a most sweet solace for those who have never offended God by mortal sin—who have ever cherished unspotted the white robe of their baptismal innocence. Alas! they are but few. We know that the angelic youth St. Aloysius received the tidings of his approaching death with the greatest joy, for he immediately entoned the *Te Deum*.

But few who pass the morning of life, not to speak of those who have borne the burdens of years, leave this world with their baptismal innocence unstained. I look around this sacred edifice and see before me a goodly multitude who have come hither to commemorate the Saviour's death, and perhaps—alas! I fear 't is more than a *perhaps*—many of them have so deeply

offended the crucified Saviour that conscience torments them and gives them no rest; and they say: "What will become of us if, in our dying moments, Satan holds up the long list of our offenses in all their enormity?" Do not despair: confess those sins with fervent sorrow; the blood of Jesus will wash the guilt away; else, why did He cry to the eternal God: "Father, forgive"?

It may be that, although you have sinned, you have already repented and sought reconciliation with God by a good confession. If so, how sweet those words for you: "Father, forgive"! And Who uttered them? The same Christ Who said to His Apostles and their successors in the holy ministry to the end of time: "Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained;"—the same Jesus Who, to strengthen you at the hour of death, instituted the sacrament of Extreme Unction, which washes away the least trace and stain of sin from the soul, and even the relics of sin. It is the same Saviour Who will forgive your sins at any time while the breath still lingers in your body, even at the very final moment, through the infinite merits of His passion and death. Yes, my brethren, He will do this if you but turn your dying eyes upon Him with a confiding and repentant heart; for a single drop of His precious blood, of which the value is infinite, would be sufficient to redeem a thousand worlds.

Why, then, O Christians—why should you despond? Christ is praying for you to the Father. He, the Lamb

of God, Who taketh away the sins of the world, has He forgotten you? Detach your hearts from earthly goods and pleasures, for, believe me, what darkens the dying moments of so many Christians is an undue attachment to them. If a person, during the course of a long life, has set his heart upon the riches of this world and labored to amass its treasures, how grieved will he not be, at the hour of death, to feel that they are slowly but surely slipping from his grasp!

Oh, then, "die daily" to the world! Seek first the Kingdom of heaven, and you may indeed cry out: "O death, where is thy sting?"

"This day thou shalt be with me in Paradise." These consoling words were spoken by Christ upon the cross. Oh, what a flood of light they pour upon the obscure night of the departing soul! The thought—"I leave the delights and treasures of the world; but what are they in comparison to those which await me in heaven?"—inspires the heart with the wish to possess the goods of the Lord in the country of the living, and to enjoy that bliss of which St. Paul affirms: "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered the heart of man what God has prepared for those who love Him."

What throws a shadow of gloom over the dying hour is the grief the sufferer feels at leaving behind the friends he sees weeping around his bed. This is a feeling from which even pious souls are not exempt. But, Christians, be consoled; Jesus from the cross cried out: "Woman, behold thy son! Son, behold

thy Mother!" If you have honored Mary, like a good child, and followed her holy example, then will she assist you in your last moments, even though father, mother, sisters, and brothers should forsake you.

Oh, what a luminous ray of celestial light is contained in the thought: "The Holy Virgin will be with me; St. Joseph, the Archangel St. Michael, and all the saints whom I have begged to obtain for me a happy death, will surround me; my guardian angel will defend me from the spirits of evil, and strengthen me to resist their attacks."

It is true that I must leave those who are dear to me, but I will be welcomed by those of my friends who await me in heaven. Oh, what joy to be forever united with them in a home where neither death nor sorrow can enter!

"My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me?" Thus did Christ pray in accordance with the psalm which predicted His sufferings. The pious child of the Church need never complain that God has forsaken him. Christ comes to him in the viaticum, to strengthen his soul in the supreme moment of his last agony.

My friends, it is hard to die. Death is a punishment of original sin. But how encouraging the thought: "It is the act, the most precious act, by which I give back my life to Him Who bestowed it, if I so overcome myself that I resign myself willingly to His divine decree and unite my will so entirely to His as to desire this very death, in this very place, and in this very

manner, and all because my loving Saviour wished it so."

If, beloved in Christ, you can meet death with such entire resignation, the flames of Purgatory will be extinguished for you, and your Lord and Judge will bid you enter at once into the joys of His heavenly home.

"I thirst!" This plaintive cry deeply affected the Blessed Virgin and St. John. Happy the Christian who has lived only for Jesus. At the hour of death his heart will be filled with the desire of the Apostle "who longed to be dissolved and to be with Christ;" and this the more because death takes from us the possibility of ever again committing sin.

"It is consummated." What a sweet assurance of rest and peace is contained herein! The burning love from the heart of the dying Saviour illumines the words with the brightest rays of consolation and hope. "It is consummated." The life of toil and sacrifice of three and thirty years is over; the cruel scourging; the sharp pain of the stinging thorns, the anguish of the crucifixion, are over: "Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit." O blessed eve which heralds the dawn of eternal glory! What a consoling ray of divine hope, not only for the Saviour, but for the Christian about to leave this world, if he too has been faithful unto death! How trifling will then be all the labors, toils, and mortifications he endured for the love of God, and how sweet the thought of the consequent bliss which awaits his soul!

Let us so regulate our lives that we may taste this

sweetness not only at the close of life, but at the close of the day when we sink into sleep, "the image of death." "It is consummated." "Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit." One glance at the crucified Jesus is sufficient to inspire the heart with the certain hope that sustained St. Francis Xavier in his last moments, as he pressed His image to his lips: "O my crucified Love, I have trusted in Thee and will never be confounded."

Dearest Jesus, so dispose our hearts in life that at the last dread hour You may appear to us as the glorious Sun of justice, to brighten with these sevenfold rays the gathering gloom which fain would darken our passage into eternity.—Amen!

FEAST OF EASTER SUNDAY.

FIRST SERMON.

“And on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalen cometh early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulcher.”—John xx, 1.

ALLELUIA! Once more we greet the joyous Easter-day, the glorious festival, the feast of feasts!

Alleluia! the lofty note of triumph resounds throughout high heaven to salute the Lamb of God, the mighty Conqueror, while earth takes up the glad refrain, and Alleluia wakes happy, holy thoughts in Christian souls, absorbed in fervent homage in many a temple wherein is celebrated this great festival with all the splendor of our Holy Church.

And yet, alas! to how many it brings no real heart-felt joy!

How many, who call themselves Christians, unite in a merely external manner in the celebration of to-day! To outward seeming they rejoice; but only a superficial joy is theirs.

To them the spiritual delight, the real happiness—in a word, the *Alleluia* of the Paschal time—brings no deep meaning; while to those who have, from spiritual death, risen to the life of grace, and then, with zealous earnestness, continue their efforts to attain perfection,

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this feast will prove a happy day indeed. The joy of Easter will penetrate the very marrow of the soul.

So it was with Mary Magdalen, and so, too, it will be with every Christian who, like that great saint, and also like Mary the Immaculate Mother of Christ, is sincerely disposed for a proper participation in the joy of Easter.

And to-day, my brethren, I will explain to you in what this special preparation for it consists; so that to each and every one of you it may be given to feel the delight of Mary Magdalen, when she beheld her risen Lord.

O Mary, thrice happy Mother of Jesus, may we participate in the joy felt by Magdalen on that Easter-morn! May a faint reflex of your sentiments, as you embraced your beloved Son and Lord, arisen from the dead, fall upon our hearts to-day!

I speak in the name of the newly-risen Jesus, to the greater glory of God!

Dear brethren, let us dwell for a few moments upon the scene!

The Redeemer, Master of life and death, had scarcely burst the bonds of His prison-house, when countless souls, ransomed by His infinite mercy from Limbo, hovered over His sepulcher. Myriads of angels too were there, bowing in homage before their King. The rosy dawn dispelled the lingering shades of night which had hung like a pall over Jerusalem, and re-

vealed the uncertain steps of one whose attitude of deep dejection betrayed her grief. It was *Mary Magdalen*.

She approaches the tomb. It is empty, and now a new anxiety weighs upon her ; when suddenly Christ stands before her, not as she had known Him in life, but in the dress of a gardener. Not recognizing Him she asks : " If thou hast taken Him hence, tell me where thou hast laid Him and I will take Him away." Now the Lord calls her by name : "*Mary*," and she feels that it is the voice of Jesus, the voice which uttered the consoling words : " Thy sins are forgiven thee." It was a voice she could not fail to know. She looks up at Him ; she recognizes Him ; she falls prostrate at His feet. " Jesus, Master, you live ! Alleluia ! " Heavenly joy thrills her heart as she hastens to the disciples with the glad tidings that Jesus lived, and had appeared to her.

Each child of the Church should share the joy of Magdalen, the penitent and forgiven. And if in it he has no part, where can be found the cause ? I answer : Something is wanting in the preparation of the heart. Look at Mary Magdalen, and learn from her. She rejoiced, because her's was a soul *purified* by sorrow and tears of repentance. In her we behold the Magdalen, who, sinking beneath the burden of her contrition, gave vent to her feelings at the feet of Jesus.

Christian ! if you feel not the joyous influence of the Paschal time, is it not that you are, as yet, unreconciled with your risen Lord ? that your soul is marred

with the disfiguring stain of *mortal sin*? For others the Easter jubilee; for you the mournful memories of Good Friday! For, alas! you have crucified your Saviour in your heart. Let me beg that you will not refuse to unite with those fervent souls whose Alleluia resounds throughout the earth, but that, by fervent prayer, you will obtain the grace of contrition, and, having "arisen with Christ," by a worthy confession you may rejoice with His faithful followers.

And *you*, lukewarm and indifferent Christian, what sentiments does this glorious day awaken within your heart? Alas! it is cold; the Alleluia finds no responsive echo there. And what wonder? You may not indeed have crucified your Saviour by mortal sin; but the many venial faults which sully the purity of your soul, drive Him from you, and sorrowfully He stands afar off.

Mary Magdalen *knelt* at His feet. It was her dearest joy to be near her Lord, but that privilege was never hers, until by tears of sorrow she had cleansed her soul from the slightest stain of sin. She was a *penitent* soul. Imitate her example, purify your soul from its sins and faults, and then, with the illustrious penitent, can you truly welcome your risen Lord.

Secondly.—Mary Magdalen had disposed her heart for the celebration of Easter by meditation. She was a *contemplative* soul. Absorbed in adoration at the feet of Jesus, she listened to the words of divine wisdom which issued from His lips, and, according to Christ Himself, she "chose the better part."

But how many Christians, celebrating Easter exteriorly, do not *meditate*, and hence a cold and lifeless faith is theirs, causing them to listen with indifference when the most sublime truths of religion are presented for their instruction. Nay, even the good and pious are not free from censure in this regard. They believe, they pray, but they do not meditate; and even by them the solemn mysteries of our redemption are not celebrated according to the spirit of our Holy Mother Church. Her wish and desire is that we may endeavor to bring the truths of holy faith before our mental vision, in as vivid a manner as though we had lived at the time those wonderful scenes in the great work of our redemption took place, and had witnessed them in the very order in which they transpired. Then we will begin to realize the reward which in an eternity of bliss awaits the purified soul and feel the sweetness of its Alleluia on earth.

Thirdly.—Mary Magdalen's heart was prepared by works of *self-denial*. She was a *mortified* soul, and how could it have been otherwise with her? Was she not the same to whom was given the grace to behold, with her own eyes, the dreadful spectacle of a lacerated, scourged, nay, even of a crucified and dying Saviour? Was she not the same devoted lover of Jesus upon whom, as she knelt beneath the cross, His tears and blood fell down? And her entire subsequent life, when she dwelt in solitude in the little hermitage in Gaul, was spent in acts of penance, although, from

the Redeemer Himself, she had heard the blessed words: "Thy sins are forgiven thee!"

And you, Christians, if your hearts are not entreating the Alleluia to-day with her exultation, why is it? Because you do not love the cross, and strive to escape from the observance of the holy season, which this day terminates. Immediately preceding the festivity of Easter, the Church, during the days set apart for penance, strives to instill into the hearts of her children that penitential spirit, which will impel them to take up the cross and follow their suffering Redeemer to Calvary. Have you spent the holy season according to that spirit? Then, indeed, you may rejoice with Mary Magdalen to-day. But, if not, although the grandeur of the ceremonies which are displayed before you can not fail to produce an impression and excite some joy, it will be but a transitory impression and a superficial joy, in which the Alleluia has no part.

Fourthly.—Mary Magdalen, in her longing after the divine word gave up every thing, and *followed* her Saviour in His apostolic missions. Trampling under foot the opinion of the world, and casting aside the promptings of human respect, in the presence of Him she found her greatest happiness. Such sentiments animated her, when, at the banquet given by the haughty Pharisee, she knelt publicly at the feet of Jesus. With such feelings she sought Him on Good Friday; prostrating herself before Him; and so also on the Easter-morn did she seek for, and find her risen Lord.

Child of the one true Church, do you wish to rejoice with Mary Magdalen? Then with her resolve to follow your Lord, and for this end seek Him with never-flagging earnestness; and, having found Him, contemplate in Him the adorable model, by imitating which you will one day behold Him face to face.

Souls who are satisfied to lead an ordinary Christian life; who do not hunger and thirst after perfection, who lead not an interior life, do not participate in the joy of this great penitent, and alas! they will never understand it.

In conclusion, the soul of Mary Magdalen was a *grateful* and *loving* soul towards Jesus. She recognized Him on that Easter-morn by His voice; and as He spoke her name, "*Mary!*" the thought of the countless favors she had received at His sacred hands rushed swiftly over her. Her heart overflowed with its burden of gratitude; and oh! she felt how sweet it would be to cancel that debt by the perfect love with which she would regard her Saviour during an eternity of purest bliss. Then, indeed, could she worthily celebrate the feast of feasts!—the glorious Easter jubilee in heaven!

Mary's love was sincere, magnanimous, self-sacrificing, and constant. Of this Christ Himself has given testimony: "*She hath loved much.*" This mighty love not only gained for her an unconditional pardon of her former sins, but it became the source of numberless graces for her future life.

And the same is promised to every member of the

one true Church, whose love for Jesus is sincere, mag-nanimous, self-sacrificing, and constant, like that of Mary Magdalen.

The recurrence of Easter, my brethren, should in-crease every year our confidence in divine Providence, and remind us of the unwearied solicitude with which God has, from our very infancy up to the present mo-ment, watched over us, guided our footsteps through the dangers which encompass us, and through His Holy Spirit is ever whispering to us to renounce our sins, to "love much," that He may "forgive us much." If we listen to that whisper we will indeed "arise with Christ;" we will participate to the utmost in the true spiritual jubilee of this blessed day.

Thus, my brethren, let your preparation for Easter be according to the disposition of St. Magdalen; and you will celebrate with Magdalen, in the spirit of the Church, Easter on earth, and soon, with Magdalen also, Easter in heaven forever.—Amen!

SECOND SERMON

"And the disciple whom Jesus loved came to the sepulcher."—John xx.

AS often as the Church, in commemoration of the glorious Resurrection, celebrates the yearly recurrence of the Paschal time, and entones the joyous Alleluia with her children, so often do we recall to mind those privileged souls who, the Gospel tells us, had the happiness of hearing the glad tidings: "Jesus lives; He has arisen," of listening to, of beholding the risen Jesus. This privilege was not limited to one or two; but was enjoyed by a number of the disciples, who believed and hoped in the Lord. Often, too, we go in spirit to the sepulcher with the holy women who went thither bearing ointments, and think of that bliss which filled their hearts when, from the angel of the Lord, they heard the welcome words: "He is arisen." We think of Mary Magdalen, whose joy found utterance in the single word, as she knelt before her Lord, "*Rabboni*."

We behold the wondering Apostles, when, on the evening of the same day, as they were assembled together "with closed doors," their Master stood before them and pronounced the blessed words: "*Pax vobis*"—"Peace be unto you."

But there is one Apostle, *St. John*, upon whom our attention should be particularly centered, that we may attain a better understanding of the state in which the Christian must be before the real joy of Easter can

illumine his soul. We have seen him at the Last Supper; we have beheld him at the foot of the cross, and let us hope that we may have shared, to some extent, in the love which filled his heart at those solemn times.

Let me, brethren, to-day present, for your contemplation, St. John, the disciple of love. Let us glance at him as he stands by the sepulcher of the Risen One, and endeavor to picture the joy which overflowed his heart as he beheld the Lord.

O Mary, Mother most joyful, infuse into our hearts that bliss which filled your own upon that first happy Easter-morn, that we, like St. John, may experience its most wonderful effects for the salvation of our souls!

I speak in the name of the newly-risen Jesus, for the greater honor and glory of God!

“He is risen; we have heard it even from the angels!” said the holy women, as they returned from the sepulcher. And as the Apostles heard the wondrous tale, two of their number immediately arose and hastened away; but the “dearly beloved Apostle,” St. John, in the fervor of his love, left St. Peter far behind, and, arriving first at the sepulcher, found the stone rolled away. St. Peter, however, was the first to enter the empty tomb. In him, therefore, is illustrated the Apostle of *faith*, while St. John typifies the disciple of *love*. In the divine economy, every thing is full of a deep, mysterious meaning, and herein we

learn that faith must first penetrate the soul before the flame of divine love is enkindled in the heart. John followed Peter, and, as he placed his hand upon the winding-sheet, which, but the evening before he had wrapped about the sacred body of his Lord, a flood of joy rushed over his soul, and filled his heart with happiness, as he felt that Jesus had indeed arisen, that Jesus lived.

We will to-day consider the character of his holy Easter joy, and endeavor to understand how mighty and sanctifying it was rendered by the excessive ardor of his *love for Christ*. To clearly realize the intense joy of this saintly disciple, we must recall the feelings which agitated his heart while, for love of the crucified One, he stood beneath the cross, and think of those words of Holy Scripture: "According to the greatness of my sorrows your consolations gladdened my soul." St. John stood at the foot of the cross wholly absorbed in compassion, adoration, gratitude, and resolution, according to the will of God, to follow Jesus unto death, through love; and, therefore, the Alleluia of the Easter joy, in which his heart rejoiced at the tomb of the arisen Jesus, was a participation in the sentiments of adoration, thanksgiving, and determination to be faithful to his calling as Apostle in proportion to his love for Christ.

The one who loves, so rejoices at the happiness of the beloved object that it would seem as if he were happier to see the joy of his friend than to feel his own. For example, what joy is experienced by a mother

whose child has met with some great good or benefit, or has been unexpectedly saved from some impending danger! But of true friendship Holy Writ testifies that it is stronger than all other love—witness that of David and Jonathan.

But incomparably more tender was the friendship of St. John for his Saviour, and in the same measure his heart rejoiced at the certainty that He had burst the bonds of the grave and lived once more. This joy must have stirred his heart to its very depths, and moved him, in a much greater degree, than it affected St. Peter and the other Apostles, because he had beheld his Saviour in agony upon the cross, in suffering and in death. His loving heart was more sensitive than theirs.

The Alleluia of his Easter joy was the outbursts of his overflowing *friendship*. It was, at the same time, one of *adoration* and *thanksgiving* for the consummation of the Redemption. Until that time the life and labors of the Lord had been, as it were, veiled in the obscurity of a mystical darkness; but by the Alleluia which came forth from the heart of Jesus as He rose from the tomb, all radiant with celestial light, this vail was rent, and that Easter morn forever dispersed the gloom. St. John, as he stood by the grave of the risen Jesus, realized more clearly than ever the whole order of salvation; and what an “Exultet” arose in his heart as he intoned it, in the same sense in which it is sung by the Church on Holy Saturday, to announce the joyful truth that Christ had risen. As often

as we hear it, our souls are filled with the joy of this holy Easter day. St. John intoned it at the sepulcher, in the name of the whole human family. Even as the Church sends forth her most joyful chants, so sang his heart, overflowing with the joy of that Easter day : “ O Ineffable Miracle of Grace ! to forgive Thy servant his sins, Thou hast delivered up Thy Son. ! ”

“ Of what avail had it been for us to be born into the world had we not received the grace of redemption ? O happy fault which gave us such a Deliverer ! ”

St. John also thanked God, as he had never done before, for the grace of the *election* which, in the kingdom of Christ, became his portion, recognizing more clearly than ever the privileges which he enjoyed before all men, even the Apostles, especially that one which gave him the care of Mary, the Immaculate Virgin, the Queen of heaven, the Mother of his Lord. How he rejoiced that he would have her example and her prayers ! for it would be her duty to care for her adopted son as became a tender and loving mother. Well may St. Paul exclaim : “ I chastise my body that I may not become a castaway. ” No marvel was it that St. Peter trembled when he thought upon the judgment which would come after death ; but St. John, the adopted son of Mary, was, through her, assured of his eternal salvation. And in relation to the duties of his apostleship in general, as he stood by the Saviour’s tomb, how greatly encouraged he felt !—how firmly he resolved to be a fruitful branch in the vineyard of the Lord !

What invigorates the soul in its apostolic calling is the strengthening power of faith, hope, and charity, united with an earnest love of our neighbor.

These were precisely the sentiments which prevailed in the heart of St. John as he burst forth in that glorious Alleluia by the grave of Christ.

The certainty of the Resurrection, as St. Paul affirms, is a pledge of the whole treasure of *faith*. "If Christ had not risen again, as He said," writes the Apostle of the nations, "we would have been miserably deceived and disappointed and left without a name." But He *did* arise, and we possess our holy faith with its promises for time and eternity. We also shall arise and live with Him forever. But St. Paul was not at the sepulcher; he did not touch the sacred body of Christ, but the beloved disciple did. With what strong testimony for the truth of the Resurrection, therefore, could John announce the Gospel with the assertion that he had lived with the Redeemer on the most intimate terms of holy union; that he beheld Him when He breathed forth His last sigh upon the cross; and looked upon Him after He had risen from the dead. The sentiments of his heart were that of triumphant *faith*.

What invigorates a soul in the exercise of its apostolic calling is victorious *hope*. "The Lord, who calls me to this office, is also my strength, and will, at some future day, be my reward." Who experienced this in a higher degree than St. John? To whom was more fully and more bountifully given the vivifying power

of Christian hope than to him who was permitted, while still on earth, to pierce the golden vista of the celestial vault, and gaze upon the mysteries of heaven?

Finally, what urges the true Apostle on in his holy mission more than any other thing is *love*—the love of God and man. In these respects, St. John was, as you know, eminently called the disciple of love. His very Epistles, contained in Holy Writ, stand, and will remain forever, undying testimonials of this his apostolic love.

This, dearly beloved in Christ, is the character of the Easter-day of St. John and of his Easter Alleluia; and these the conditions, to feel it re-echoed in our own hearts.—Amen!

THIRD SERMON.

“In Thy light we shall see light.”—Ps. xxxv.

THE glorious orb of day was still invisible to the expectant world in the early Easter-morn, when the earth trembled as if moved by some terrible convulsion of nature and an angel of the choir of the Powers, radiant and beautiful, hovered above the sepulcher wherein lay the Body of Christ, and descending rolled the stone away. Instantaneously the glorified soul approached, the Sacred Body was transfigured, and the Lord arose, body and soul, more brilliant than the sun, which now burst forth in all its splendor to pay fitting tribute to Him Who gave it light—Who came forth the Victor of all the powers of evil, the Conqueror of death and hell. Then were seen the millions of holy souls who, for four thousand years, had languished in the gloomy prison of Limbo, full of trust in the Lord, and waited until “patience had her perfect work.”

Adam and Eve, the venerable patriarchs and prophets, St. Joseph, St. John the Baptist, with legions of holy angels, surround the Redeemer, the Sun of justice, the Lord Who had risen in all the grandeur of His Majesty. Yet a little while and He will ascend from the Mount of Olives, penetrate the heavens, and take His place at the right hand of the Father, clothed with the glory which flows from His divinity to His humanity, and send throughout high heaven celestial

light to intensify the bliss of the angels and saints therein. In other words, all that which causes heaven to be heaven, will be imparted in its full extent by Christ to all the blessed therein.

Let us to-day, therefore, look up to Him as the Sun in the kingdom of eternal beatitude. Let us picture to ourselves the heavens opening to our wondering view, while strains of sweetest music fall on our raptured ear. It is the angels intoning their Easter hymn.

O Mary, Queen of heaven, enthroned at the side of thy divine Son, pray for us that we may one day see Him in His glory and share in His beatification forever!

I speak in the holy name of Jesus, Who arose from the dead, to the greater honor and glory of God!

What causes heaven to be heaven is, first, its *external magnificence*.

When God created the visible world, the angels burst forth in praise, as Holy Scripture says in the Book of Job, on beholding such a stream of divine power and wisdom and goodness. Even after the sin of our first parents it still presented a scene of beauty and grandeur, and it does so still.

What a wonderfully majestic spectacle is afforded by the "deep and dark blue ocean" as it seems blended with the brilliant skies which it reflects in its depths! What a glorious radiance is cast upon the changing waters by the setting sun as he sinks to rest—as he gilds

the ever-tossing waves with tints of the most gorgeous hue. The world of stars which sparkle in the darkness of the night, form a most enchanting sight ; how then would it be, were we permitted to contemplate those wonders of creation through that lofty arch of the heavens, so far above the stars, and view the essence of those objects of which we now only behold the exterior appearance ?

But as a diamond, encircled by precious stones, emits rays of dazzling light from the center of a diadem, so does the glorified *humanity* of Christ shine forth amid the angels and saints, as the mystical Sun, compared to which, our sun is naught but a waning light. In this glorious radiance of the humanity of Christ, the Blessed eternally contemplate the crown of the creation, especially if we consider its transfiguration at the end of time.

As God the Father created the world by the Son, so do we contemplate in the light which is Christ, the ideal of the creation as it was conceived by the eternal Father, and consider it so in all its relations to the creation of grace through the same Jesus Christ.

No one can so well explain the beauty of a work as the author thereof. Contemplative soul, look up to Christ, Who has arisen,—and rejoice ; soon shalt thou see Him in His glory.

What adds to the happiness of heaven is, secondly, the sight of the *glorified* world of *spirits*. The angels are the blossoms of the creation. The doctors of the Church with St. Bernardine of Sienna affirm that God

created more angels than visible corporeal beings because He was Himself a Spirit. Those beautiful spirits are divided into nine choirs, each one higher than the other, as we are taught to believe by our holy faith, viz: Angels, Archangels, Principalities, Thrones, Dominations, Powers, Virtues, Cherubim, and Seraphim. Each choir is higher, and therefore more beautiful than the other. We will one day behold in heaven the reason of this, but some of it we are already permitted to know.

For all their beatitude and glory, the angels are mediately indebted to Jesus. The holy Fathers assert that it was the confession and adoration of the Son of God, Who was to become man, into which mystery God permitted them to glance, which confirmed them forever in grace. And after Christ ascended into heaven the angels beheld, according to their ranks, the increase of glory which they were to receive from the glorified King of that celestial realm. This increase of glory, conferred separately on every choir, like rays of light, is *centered* in the brilliant humanity of Christ, the King of every choir of them.

It is somewhat similar to the choirs of the *Saints*, which are different too, glorified by their individual graces.

In heaven we will one day, through the grace of God, behold Adam and Eve, the Patriarchs, the Prophets, the Holy Innocents, the Virgins, the Confessors, the Bishops, the Martyrs, and the Apostles of Christ. Each of these choirs is distinguished by a partic-

ular degree of glory. By whatever degrees of glory these choirs are distinguished, transfigured, and beatified, their different glories, with those of Mary herself, the Queen of the Saints, are as so many rays which are concentrated in Christ as the Sun.

What adds to the individual bliss enjoyed by the saints of God in heaven, is the fact that it is a *reward* conferred upon them for the holy lives which, in imitation of Christ, they led upon earth. But, as the Church at the Council of Trent taught, God crowns only the gifts of His grace whose Creator is Christ. The rays of all the merits of the saints unite therefore in Him, the author of grace.

What causes heaven to be heaven is the *united* enjoyment of all its joys through Christ our Lord. In that blissful home all will be united in love with Christ and with one another, as He is one with the Father and the Holy Ghost. Heaven is mine; all is mine through Jesus Christ! Such will one day be the outburst of joy of every sanctified soul.

What causes heaven to be heaven is the thought that it was already *lost* to us, and that Christ, the Redeemer, *regained* and re-opened it for all. Alleluia!

What enhances its bliss since Christ ascended thither, is the character it possesses as the kingdom of *triumph*. Here, too, we have no reason to envy the angels, for upon one occasion only had they an opportunity of acquiring merit through Christ, when they confessed and adored the Son of God made man, and were thereby confirmed in grace. Although they are,

as St. Paul calls them, ministering spirits, they but fulfill the will of God without increasing their happiness or merit. This is not the case with us children of men. Every breath, every thought, every desire, every work, through divine grace, may be an occasion of merit for us to increase our glory in heaven, which is, therefore, for us also the kingdom of triumph. Life is, as Holy Writ testifies, a warfare against the enemies of salvation ; but Christ conquered them, and we can do likewise through Him. We know not what joys of heaven would have awaited us if we had never sinned ; but this much is certain, it would never have become what it is now, the kingdom of *triumph*, which character elevates its joy in an immeasurably great degree.

In conclusion, beloved in Christ, " what is heaven ? " Listen ! *It is God.* "*I myself,*" says the Lord. " I am your infinite reward." Yes ! It is the beatific vision of God, an intimate union with Him who is all delight, beatitude, and love. All this we shall possess through Christ. The end and aim of the creation is God Himself, the glorification of His perfections in their exterior relations. We distinguish, in this regard, His omniscience, omnipotence, wisdom, mercy, longanimity, justice, truth, majesty,—His beauty, beatitude, and love. But all these divine attributes concentrate their most brilliant radiance in the work of Redemption, consummated by Christ. So, then, it is Christ through Whom we are permitted to contemplate God in the triumph of His perfections in heaven, and be there inseparably united with Him.

That is proved by His prayer as High Priest: "Father, I pray Thee, let them be one with Us, as We are one;" and again: "No one knoweth the Father save the Son, and those to whom the Son will reveal Him." This is verified by Christ the Sun, in the kingdom of light, as it is written: "In Thy light we will see light."

The various ways in which God so wonderfully conducts us to our destiny, in conjunction with the fate of all, will then decidedly prove that it is Christ to whom we are indebted for the possession of heaven. Therefore, one day, the tribute of praise will resound before His throne in heaven: "Worthy is the Lamb to receive divinity, adoration, gratitude: Who has redeemed us with His blood, and has made us as kings in His celestial realm." St. John asserts: "The city of God needs no light, for Christ is her light." He, the glorious Sun of Redemption and Salvation.—Amen!

FEAST OF EASTER MONDAY.

FIRST SERMON.

“What are these discourses that you hold one with another as yon walk, and are sad?”—Luke xxiv.

SAD and sorrowful, as the Gospel of to-day tells us, the disciples went to Emmaus. Their converse turned upon what had happened to Jesus—His sufferings and death upon the cross. They spoke of their grief, although some of the Saviour's friends declared that He had risen and was alive, and, in short, they deserved the reproach which fell from the divine lips: “O foolish and slow of belief! why are you so sad?” Confide in your Redeemer, who said that on the third day He would arise from death to life.

In a short time they recognized Him at the breaking of the bread, and knew that He had indeed arisen; and their hearts were, for the first time, filled with the plenitude of Easter joy. Then they hastened to Jerusalem, to tell the assembled disciples; and, behold,

NOTE.—This sermon was originally written in German, and sent to Berlin. It appeared in pamphlet form, under the title: “The Pharisees of Our Times.” We here give but an abridgment of it. Nevertheless, as an exception, it exceeds the usual brevity of the other sermons contained in this volume, and may serve as a lecture on this topic.

suddenly Christ Himself stood in their midst with the blessed words: "Peace be with you."

Now, the last trace of sadness disappears from their hearts, and glad rejoicing takes its place. Their beloved Master—their Saviour and Friend, the Lord of heaven and earth—has triumphed over death and hell, burst the bonds of His prison-house, and come to dwell with them again.

What a contrast to the feelings of the deicides, when the guards of the sepulcher returned with the message: "Jesus has arisen!"

Dearly beloved, in the daily walks of life, we meet with those faint-hearted children of the Church who falter and well nigh lose courage when they hear of, and even see, the violence suffered by the Bride of Christ in our day.

But to all such I would say: "Be of good heart; Jesus is alive and protects His Church. But let her persecutors tremble!"

O Mary, by that joy which filled your heart on that Easter-morn, when you again beheld your beloved Son, pray for us, that we may have courage for the combat and gain the victory!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, to the greater honor and glory of God!

After the last spark of life had fled, the sacred body of Christ was pierced with a lance, and a gaping wound appeared; and from His heart came blood and water—

a proof that He was indeed *dead*. The scribes and Pharisees, and all the enemies of the Saviour, rejoiced with a joy exceedingly great at the sight as they stood near by.

It is true that the unprecedented phenomena succeeding His death gave rise to apprehension and consternation. The darkening of the sun; the trembling of the earth beneath their feet; the fearful spectacle which the streets of Jerusalem presented as the dead arose and walked the streets to reproach the inhabitants with the crime of deicide; and the rending, by an unseen power, of the heavily-wrought vail of the temple from the top to the very bottom, certainly made an impression on the enemies of Christ; but they derived consolation from the thought that He was dead and could trouble them no more. Yet, recalling His declaration, that in three days He would rise again, they hastened to Pilate; and, for greater security, demanded that a guard should be placed round the sepulcher. True, they affected to disbelieve the assertion of the Impostor, as they dared to style Him, but shuddered at the mere possibility of such an event being promulgated among the people, lest, hearing, they might believe, "and the last state would be worse than the first." And so a guard was placed round the holy grave; and, what was the effect? The unwelcome tidings were announced, by the very soldiers of that guard, which served only to strengthen the belief of all who heard them.

The hush of midnight had fallen upon the world

when, from the Choir of the Powers, a radiant angel swiftly descended and removed the stone from the Saviour's grave. The earth trembled; and Christ, encompassed by heavenly light, arose from death to life.

In terror most abject the guards beheld the wondrous sight, and then in wild affright they fled to tell that Jesus lived! "He lives! He lives!" "Who?" "Jesus, whom you crucified, has risen from the dead!" "You dream; you rave; this is but the wild fancy of a fevered brain!" cried out the Pharisees, pale with alarm.

We may well believe that they made every attempt to silence the guards; or, tempting them with glittering gold, induced them to tell some garbled story. The scribes and Pharisees scarcely believed it themselves; thinking that, if it were true, Jesus would have at once manifested Himself to the people; for, foolish and blind as they were, they could not know that God's ways were not the ways of man. Yet, to be perfectly sure, they bribed the guards.

They paused not to consider that the manner in which Christ arose was a splendid testimony in favor of the divinity of the Church; nor to reflect how that divinity would be more firmly established in the eyes of the people if the Gospel were announced, not by Christ, but by poor and humble men who would act under His direction, so that the faith which was founded upon the cross would be promulgated by them, from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same, in such a manner that it would not be

forced on man, but would be meritorious for all who would embrace it with sincerity of heart. For, as St. Paul observes, this would afford to all an occasion to share in the merits of the Redeemer of the world. Of all this, the Pharisees never thought; but deceived themselves with the hope that if Christ appeared not in public, the report of His resurrection would finally die away. In this, however, they were doomed to disappointment.

But fifty days elapsed, and the power of the Holy Ghost effused itself upon the disciples; and St. Peter, filled with that divine power, stood firm before the assembled multitude that came to hear his inspired words. And what was the subject of his discourse? "This Jesus, who was put to death, is alive; we have witnessed the miracle. Do penance, and save yourselves; for there is no other name under heaven given to man by which he can be saved than the name of the newly-risen Jesus."

And thousands believed—priests and people—and were baptized on the same day, becoming members of the one true Church. They could not resist the power of miracles, which the Apostles worked before their very eyes. And what mattered it to the two disciples of faith and love—St. Peter and St. John—that the rays of the setting sun fell upon the gloomy prison walls wherein they were thrown for confessing Christ? They were taken before the Sanhedrim, the highest tribunal of the Jews. All that was required of them was silence. "Be ye silent; say nothing of the Resur-

rection." But, for reply, they uttered the words which, during the long course of nineteen centuries, have been the watchword of those who have combatted for Christ and for His holy faith: "Judge yourselves whether it were better to obey God or man."

This reply, beloved in Christ Jesus, finds a ready echo in our own day, especially throughout all Germany, with the most sublime power of faith. "Judge yourselves whether it were better to obey God or man." No earthly power can still the cry; persecution is powerless; Jesus lives!

Thus rang the cry of triumph throughout the holy city, and the heroic Apostles went forth to the confines of the earth: "He is risen, He is alive." All peoples and nations shall hear it. This, as St. Paul remarks, places the seal upon our holy faith. Had Christ not arisen we would have been deceived, the Gospel a gross illusion, and we who preach it, what would we have been? Into what folly would we not have been betrayed had we not possessed a firm assurance of the Resurrection! For what other fruit would have sprung from our labors but want, misery, deprivation, persecution, and death? But Jesus *did* arise. Consequently faith, with all its promises, is true.

"Thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against her." And again: "Behold, I send you as lambs among wolves." "As they have persecuted me, so they will persecute you;" but "fear not; I have overcome the world." "Blessed are you if they persecute

you for my sake. If they persecute and speak deceitfully of you, rejoice and be glad; for great, exceeding great, will be your reward in heaven." Yes, Jesus lives. This firmly-grounded and lively faith is the pulse which stirs the heart of the Church, and inspires her with courage to conquer, though tempests may lower and storms may rage. Also in this year of grace, 18—, the joyous Alleluia resounds throughout all Christendom, and ascends on high to the throne of the living God from the four ends of the globe.

The enemies of the Church do not regard her trials, no matter how nobly borne, as triumphs, but look upon them with disdainful eye. Let them not boast too soon. They can never destroy the Bride of Christ. It is true that the strongest military force is arrayed against her, so that if she had been founded by military power—and if Christ had entrusted His Church to the protection and favor of the great ones of the earth, and had not promised to them His protection and assistance until the consummation of the world—far different would be the result. Then, indeed, would she have now cause to tremble, since she would be totally forsaken by her own crowned children, and might well cry out with Christ: "I looked around, but there was no one to help; and I trod the winepress alone." The Church, as the mystical body of Christ, knows that there is no other way to triumph with Him, than that which began on Calvary; and that to rise from the grave on the last dread day, as the Church triumphant, to celebrate an Easter-day

with her divine Spouse in heaven, she must participate in the agonizing sorrow of His sacred Passion.

Her confidence, therefore, is not placed in the powerful arm of the mighty. Never has she trusted in them, for her general experience of them has been, as the Holy Ghost, through the psalmist, declared centuries ago: "The powerful and the princes of the earth have joined together against the Lord and His anointed; but the Lord laughs at them." Think of Sennacherib, who dared to send a derisive letter to Jerusalem—to the temple, and lo! the morrow's sun arose upon a vast army of soldiers, struck dead around the city, in one single night, by an angel of the Lord.

Jesus, the King of angels, needs not to exalt Himself. In His Passion He says: "If I were to ask My Father, He would send Me more than twelve legions of angels to protect Me." Twelve legions! And one would have been a more than sufficient force against all the soldiers in the world. And the Church has the protection not only of angels, but of the Lord Himself. Therefore she appeals not to her enemies for pity, neither does she fear their hate. Most true it is that she enjoys not to-day the protection of a Constantine, a Charlemagne, a Louis, or a Ferdinand, who are gone, but One mightier than they remains with her. Jesus *lives*! The influence of His presence may be felt from the tabernacle of the loftiest temple in Rome and Cologne to the poorest resting-place of

our Lord in the humble little chapel of some American forest. The Church trusts in Him who liveth and has declared: "All power is given to Me in heaven and on earth." He, the King of kings, the Lord of hosts, defends her.

Whence, then, O ye persecutors of the faith! comes your certainty of triumph which you expect? It is from your arrogant confidence in your own perfidious prudence and diplomacy, from the plans so admirably devised by the members of your secret societies, and, more than all, from the assurance you feel that you are collecting all your energies for the crushing blow which will ruin the devoted members of the Holy Catholic Church, even as the terrible avalanche which, as it rolls down the mountain side, destroys all who come in its way. O folly!

Yes, my brethren, had the Church been established and introduced into the world by human prudence, and her government founded upon the darkness and deceit of diplomatic combinations; if her duration and welfare were made to depend on such circumstances, then, you could hope to see her crushed; then would the Church have cause to dread the prospect of to-day. But this is so far from being true that St. Paul assures us that the children of the world look upon the Gospel as folly. Had its divine Founder proceeded in His great work according to human prudence, for the propagation of His Church, he would not have selected twelve ignorant fishermen, but His choice would have fallen upon men learned and skilled

in diplomatic lore, or upon the great and rich ones of the earth.

The Church has ceased to look for aid and comfort now. Her confidence of victory is the consciousness of faith. "Jesus lives!" Hear this, ye enemies of this holy faith, and tremble! You may hide your schemes from man, even from the vicar of Christ, but *He*, the Lord, the Protector of His people, looks down and reads them all. Go on with your evil devices; surround them, as is most fitting, with the gloom and silence of the midnight hour; bury them deep beneath the weight of your *secret* oaths; the eye of the Lord is upon you,—that all-seeing *eye* which discerned the deeds of the Egyptians, and defeated their plans when they were so sure of victory. And Holy Scripture says, that as they beheld this terrible eye in the clouds, terror-stricken, they cried out: "The Lord fighteth for Israel, let us abandon the conflict." But it was too late. The horses sprang forward, the wheels fell from the chariots, the turbid waters of the Red Sea rushed over them, and horsemen and chariots "were sunk in the wave." Yes, the eye of the Lord is upon you! Cease persecuting His Church while there is still time. Can you not hear the angry roar of the raging waters which threaten to engulf you in their depths? Do not rejoice in an ill-founded confidence of victory, trusting in the power of the law—in the protection of the State, which, in your eyes, is omnipotent. With your unjust laws you wish to bind the Church, through her ministers, in fetters, which can

not be loosed ; and *apparently* you may succeed, for with you might is right ; and while no one is able to resist, you trample upon the weak and the poor. But hearken, O ye enemies of Christ ! rivet, if you will, the strongest chains around His ministers ; force His vicar to dwell a captive within his prison home ; you can *never* fetter the Church ! The mystical Bride of Christ, free and unchained, smiles at your futile efforts ; for Christ is her Head, her Defender, her Spouse ; and He is free. “ He has risen ; He lives ; ” and will one day judge you according to His law.

“ From thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead.” One day, and God knows how soon—it may be that the time is near at hand—the avenging arm of His justice will be stretched over you, and the sun of your power will set. Read old Lactantius, and see therein that not one crowned persecutor of the Church escaped a woeful punishment. The history of the present time will tell the same. Witness Cavour, the third Napoleon, and others who have been already swept away by death and brought before the stern judgment-seat of an angry God. And what would they tell you now ?

Whence comes this confidence of victory in your warfare against the Church ? You trust to *public opinion*, which you win to the side of wrong by fraud and falsehood. Yet beware, lest you stretch the line too far, and delude only the blind and unthinking populace—not men who love and try to see the truth. O Pharisees of modern times ! you leave naught

untried to make the world believe that you would be its greatest benefactors, and that only the Church stands in the way of the wealth and greatness which would pour in upon man, could that "vile dominion" of the priests be overthrown. But your works and the fruits thereof savor too much of the "sounding brass" and the "tinkling cymbal" to influence reflecting men.

What! the Church an enemy of culture and progress? The history of the world, and especially of Germany, cries out "'t is false." What would almost all Europe be to-day if the Catholic Church had not educated barbarians up to the standard of civilized men? Most probably yet a wilderness. You glory in the idea that you have drawn the sword in the conflict of culture, and pretend to unsheathe it for liberty in opposition to the ultramontane clergy "in their vile oppression," while, in truth, you have unsheathed it but in the annihilation of their noble efforts for the welfare of mankind: You profess to create the happiness of nations, forgetting that it is "good to live under the crozier." Ask Rome herself! Had her citizens more weighty burdens under Pius IX. or Victor Emanuel? You, who fain would rule the Church, educate her ministers, and judge of their every actions, still dare to speak of usurpations on the part of that holy, that divine Church! We ask, when did Pius IX. or his successor Leo XIII. ever think of examining your officers of the state, or attempt to control your treasury? You slander the

Church and her ministers when you accuse them of believing that "the end justifies the means," for that is the very maxim which guides *your* course, as your deeds show but too well. You speak of the usurpations of the Church against the state, yet when did she take from you one little foot of soil? while *you* have robbed the Holy Father of the heritage which came and belong to Him by right, and styled it "annexation." You have unblushingly stolen the property of the Church; you make, and annul contracts at your own good pleasure; but God is faithful and true. *Jesus lives*, and will keep his word: "I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world." "The gates of hell shall not prevail against her."

Certainly the successors of St. Peter die, but He Whom they represent, *Jesus*, dies no more. Therefore, my dearest children of Holy Church, rejoice and exult with your mother in this happy Easter-time; forget your fears; the Lord is nigh.

A few words before I close as to the resemblance between the Pharisees and all the enemies of Christ at Jerusalem, and the modern Pharisees and his enemies of the present day. We might well imagine that the gulf of nineteen centuries was bridged over, so wonderful is the resemblance between them. I look in spirit to that mount, so precious by its sacred memories, and see the crucified, dying Redeemer, the Soldiers, the Scribes and Pharisees; then turning to that Calvary, whereon the Church is daily crucified, I look on Soldiers, Pharisees, and Scribes,—Soldiers arrayed

against her, ~~men~~ full of pretended righteousness—learned men who have so far forgotten their early lessons as to abandon the Church.

The enemies of Christ shouted in derision : “ Let Him come down from the cross, and we will believe in Him,” but they were not sincere. Had the Saviour done so, they would have seized and bound Him to the cross once more. In like manner the enemies of Jesus act to-day, when they scornfully bid His vicar free himself from the Sardinian power ; and when they haste to the assistance of that power, bid him secure their weapons, and they will then believe in his infallibility. But he can not do this !

The Pharisees appealed to the *law* to excuse their crime of deicide, and now the secret societies try to win over the officers of the state. They enact laws, and to what do they amount ? Away with her ! Crucify her ! Let the very name of the Catholic Church be erased from the face of the earth.

The Pharisees gloried in their loyalty, and would acknowledge no other authority than that of the emperor. Jesus calls Himself the Son of God, but they place Him below the Cæsar. So, too, did they act as diplomats, asserting that Jesus was an enemy of the state, and that He seduced the people. The most effective weapon they directed against Pilate to force him to condemn the Saviour, was this : “ If thou release this man, thou art not the friend of the Cæsar.” And in our day, beloved in Christ, Catholics, be their station in life what it may, are called dangerous to the

country which shelters and protects them. But we loudly protest that we are no more what they represent us to be, than was Christ an enemy of the Romans and dangerous to the state.

Say! were Christ to appear once more in the flesh on earth, would you permit Him to travel through your country, and preach the gospel unmolested? You would not, indeed. "Away with Him! away with Him! Cast Him into the deepest dungeon, or force Him to leave at once," would be your verdict.

And yet, forsooth, you call a government which does behave in this way, a Christian one? Herod and Pilate were reconciled over the crucifixion of Jesus. History repeats itself, my brethren, and we see persons *of* the most opposite opinions and characters join hands against the Church. Ministers and potentates, inimical to each other in every other respect,—Döllenger and Reinkens, old Catholics and Jansenists, Apostate Catholics and Protestants of the most divers sects, Spaniards and Brazilians, Russians and Prussians, Socialists and Capitalists, Republicans and Royalists,—unite in perfect sympathy against the Church.

From the guards themselves the Pharisees heard of the Resurrection, and yet they made no inquiries into it. They simply thought: "We will not believe it," and remained indifferent; or rather, so obstinately were they disposed, that if they could have beheld the Saviour crucified a second, a third time—yea, a thousand times—rising again and again from the dead, they would not have believed in Him. And so it is with our modern

Pharisees. They sentence to banishment those whom they are pleased to style dangerous to the state, before searching into a single case. They can not endure their presence, because they give glorious testimony to the truth of the Church. They do not want the Church, and so condemn her, and those who support her cause, always with the same injustice. The Pharisees bribed the soldiers to conceal the truth, and even to utter falsehoods the most direct and base; and those of our day seek to bribe the guards of the public press to conceal or distort the truth. The guards, in those bye-gone days, said that while they were asleep "the disciples stole the body." Most justly has St. Augustine ridiculed the absurdity of these lying hypocrites: "So, then, the disciples did it while you were asleep?" How could you, guards, have seen them if you were asleep? So you bring sleeping witnesses? O malice! we might almost think you slept yourselves, not to recognize such fraud and contradiction. And to our modern Pharisees we may say: "Have you passed your whole lives in sleep, dreaming the hours away, that you have never heard of, or read the glorious career of the Church, her combats and her victories?"

The enemies of St. Peter and the faith, in the early days of Christianity, could even then take to heart the admonition of Gamaliel in regard to the infant Church: "If this work is of God, you can not destroy it" And now over eighteen centuries have passed, during which the Church has suffered constant attacks, but

from every one she has arisen more glorious and beautiful. How can you deny her divine character?

Look at those three hundred years during which the Roman emperors, with scarce a single exception, unsheathed their swords against the Church, and subjected her faithful children, among whom were many of the sovereign pontiffs, to the most cruel torments. Many of them, indeed, gave up their lives rather than be unfaithful to Him Whose vicars they were.

Think of Arianism which crept into the Church directly after, when numbers of the bishops embraced the heresy; while now, among those who are false to the one true faith, there can not be found one single bishop. Think of the conflicts of the Middle Ages; the long and weary contest of the Hohenstauffens,—their outrages; the great schism; the Reformation. Consider the French Revolution and its terrible results,—the Church persecuted, her ministers taken captive, and yet she issued victorious from all this.

In our own day the “Infallibility” of the successors of Peter has been defined, and the Church is as firmly grounded as in her earliest days upon this immovable rock. To so many proofs can our enemies be blind and deaf? If so, such stupidity richly merits the ridicule found in the caricature that was placed upon every corner of the streets in Berlin, representing an attempt to force the rock of Peter from its foundation, and hurl it over a precipice, together with the Church which is built upon it. The devil appears on the scene. “Go on,” he says, “and see how you will succeed. For more

than eighteen hundred years it has been my constant aim to accomplish that feat, and I am no nearer to it than when I began."

Therefore, Catholics, courage! Even now when the clouds of persecution lower so darkly over the religious horizon, fail not to rejoice, and to entone, also this year, the Alleluia of happy Easter. Victory is certain. Persecution can only increase our merits in heaven, when, after a stormy combat here below, we celebrate with Christ a glorious Easter there,—the jubilee of the Church triumphant after the final downfall of her enemies! Oh, what thunders of a glad and joyous Alleluia will then eternally resound throughout that celestial dome, before the throne of Him Who conquered death and hell! Amen!

SECOND SERMON.

“Those belonging to Christ shall rise first.”—1 Thess. iv, 15.

“I believe in the resurrection of the body.

SO do we, children of the Holy Catholic Church, declare our belief as we find it in the Apostles' Creed. This article of faith, Christ, in speaking of the end of the world, announced Himself in the most solemn manner. And St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Corinthians, expounds the same belief, for he expressly speaks of a twofold Resurrection, viz: Either to glory or dishonor,—for the good, to glory; for the wicked, to dishonor. But that it will surely tend to our glory, a spiritual resurrection must have already taken place in our lives, if we have been so unhappy as to have lived in a state of sin or tepidity, which is so hateful in the sight of God.

Lent, therefore, has been instituted by the Church as a preparation for the glorious Feast of Easter; and she invites her children to spend it in such a manner that they may be ready for this happy day—be animated with new zeal, and arise from the grave of sin or tepidity to a holy life in imitation of Christ.

But this is not the case with all who apparently celebrate Easter with the Church. The Christian may, it is true, according to that precept which commands him to do so, have made his confession; but, alas! it was illusion, for there was no amendment of life, and, consequently, no true spiritual resurrection.

To prove the truth of this assertion, my dearest brethren, will be the object of my discourse to-day.

O Mary, who hast already risen from death, bless, I beseech thee, the words which I here direct to the hearts of thy children!

I speak in the most holy name of the risen Jesus, for the greater glory of God!

Good Friday—that day so memorable for the human race; that day whose every hour was laden with the deepest sorrow the heart can bear; that day so sad and yet so consoling for the children of Adam—has passed, and Christ lies dead in the sepulcher. A heavy stone bars the entrance to the sacred tomb; and herein do we find the picture of the sinner who lies buried deep in the grave of sin.

Sin deprives our souls of the life of grace. The habit of sin is the grave which incloses the sinner; and in the stone which seals it so fast we behold an emblem of the difficulties which lie in the way of his conversion. These are: the power of habit, the fascination of evil desires, temporal gain or loss which a return to God may entail; and, more than all, human respect, or a servile fear of man.

Read the confessions of St. Augustine, that great saint who, in his own case, experienced what a degree of self-command is required to enable poor sinners to rise from the grave of sin to a true spiritual resurrection.

Midnight passes to give place to the coming dawn. The earth trembles. What is signified by this, in relation to the different times in which the sinner has arisen from spiritual death, we will clearly perceive when we consider what the Church, through the Council of Trent, teaches for the justification of the sinner.

In that twilight of faith which still lingers over his soul, the sinner begins to feel and lament his miserable condition. He shudders at the thought of the terrible judgment of God, especially when he reflects on the fate which awaits him, when, on the day of final doom, the archangel sounds his trumpet calling upon the dead to arise and come to judgment. Then, indeed, is it that he realizes his weakness; and the first faint gleam of hope dawns upon his soul that it may be possible for him to give up his evil habits, and be once more a child of God. And the hope becomes brighter when he remembers the infinite mercy of his Creator, and the means which God, in His infinite love, has left to His Church for the forgiveness of sins—the Sacrament of Penance.

His guardian-angel prays for him; and, by the omnipotence of grace, the stone is rolled away. Temporal considerations, which were the guard around the grave of sin, take flight; and the sinner arises from that tomb in which, perhaps, he has been lying for years. Well for him if it prove to be a permanent resurrection for eternal life; but, my dear brethren, this is only the case when, in his exterior, as well as

in his interior, life and soul, there shine forth, with steady light, those properties through which our Divine Model, Christ, raised Himself from the grave.

These are, especially, the following:

The bodies of the just, as they arise on the last day, will be *luminous*—that is, spiritually transfigured, *agile*; that is, having power to soar aloft, filled with eternal *bliss* and *immortal* life.

In the spiritual sense, these same properties signify the true Resurrection from the death of the soul to a new *spiritual* life. The bodies of the blessed, as they arise from the dead, will no longer be characterized by that cumbersome weight which seemed, in life, to draw them to earth; but, as St. Paul teaches, the arisen saints simultaneously soar up in the air to meet the Redeemer, even as His sacred body soared instantaneously in triumph above the tomb.

And now, what relation does this condition of body bear to the condition of the soul of that sinner who has truly repented and arisen to a better life?

First, dearly beloved, he no longer feels the annoyance and pain which formerly pressed like a heavy weight upon his soul and bore him down, making it difficult and even impossible for him to walk in the path of virtue, to avoid the occasions of sin, and to overcome the pressure of temptation.

Now, strengthened by divine grace, he feels changed, a new life is infused into his soul, and what heretofore only inspired him with disgust, now becomes sweet and agreeable, and even tends to the recreation of his

soul—such as a child-like intercourse with God and the performance of acts of Christian piety.

The glorified bodies of the just are also *agile*; that is, in what place soever man thinks of being, there he is, body and soul.

Let us make the application and say, man, when in a state of habitual sin, does not proceed with fervor in the divine service. He is spiritually lame, but after his resurrection he hastens with pleasure whithersoever he is called by the whispers of grace. He can rejoice with David: "After Thou hast enlarged my heart I run in the way of Thy commandments."

Before he has truly arisen, the sinner lies in the grave of sin, deep—buried deep. He has eyes, and sees not—ears, and hears not; he has hands, yet can not use them; he has feet, yet can not walk. Instead of the sweet odor of Christ, which St. Paul admonishes us to diffuse around, he spreads, by the mire of those sins in which he wallows, the pestilential exhalation of bad example.

Now, by a true resurrection and by leading a virtuous life, the converted sinner beholds the fulfillment spiritually of those miracles which Christ mentioned when He sent the disciples to St. John with the words: "Say to John, The blind see, the deaf hear, the dumb speak, the lame walk, and the dead arise."

He who has arisen to a life of grace and zeal sees clearly before him the way to perfection, perceives the inspirations of the Holy Ghost, intones by word and deed the praises of God, makes rapid strides in the

path of virtue, and, advancing daily in perfection, preserves in his soul the light and life of the grace of God.

At the last day the bodies of the blessed will be filled with *delight—radiant*, luminous, and beautiful to behold; for Christ says: "But the just shall one day shine like stars in the kingdom of My Father."

What relation does this bear to the state of that sinner who has arisen from the grave of iniquity and soared to his Saviour with contrite love?

O dearly beloved in Christ Jesus, it is the fulfillment of the promise of Christ, the hundredfold of consolation and delight which we taste even amid the trials and troubles of life if we faithfully imitate Him and live an interior life, hidden with Christ in God, thus acquiring the knowledge of those higher degrees of prayer which is not given to worldlings to know.

It is also the light of good *example* to which Christ refers when He calls out to us: "Therefore let the light of your good works shine before men, that they may behold them, and glorify your Father Who is in heaven."

There are especially seven rays of splendor which illumine the life of the truly converted sinner, and these correspond to the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost. The characteristic of these sevenfold gifts of the Spirit of light is that they lead us to the permanent practice of the seven corresponding virtues, for the greater sanctification of our souls.

This consideration points to the last property of the

glorified bodies of the saved—*Immortality*. In applying this to the condition of the truly converted sinner in regard to his salvation, it means, my brethren, “No more relapses.” “Christ is risen from death, and dies no more.” The words spoken by the angel to the holy women must, in a spiritual manner, be verified in all those who have arisen from the grave of sin: “He is no longer here.”

No ; grace has penetrated the heart of that happy penitent, and he has ceased to dwell amid the willful occasions of sin. He can not be found in that place where his only aim was the gratification of his evil desires. He is, in fine, no longer a frequenter of his former wicked haunts.

What I have here said of the resurrection from the spiritual death of sin is equally applicable to the change from a state of tepidity to a life of zeal, and from a holy life to one of still greater sanctity, by the annual renewal of the celebration of this joyful feast in spirit and in truth.—Amen !

THIRD SERMON.

“To him that shall overcome, I will give to sit with Me in My throne, as I also have overcome.”—Apoc. iii, 21.

ON every feast of the Church is stamped the impress and character of the mystery of faith it is intended to commemorate, and of which we are vividly reminded by its annual occurrence. Therefore the festival of Easter—“the feast of feasts”—is a day of triumph, and the exultant strain of the “Alleluia” resounds throughout the Church. On Holy Saturday, the Preface salutes Christ as the glorified Redeemer, Who, by His resurrection, triumphed over death and hell.

All Christendom entones a gladsome Easter hymn in honor of the Conqueror Who vanquished death, and burst the trammels of the grave.

The Saviour struggled against the enemies of our salvation and conquered; and so will you vanquish them, if you call upon Him.

“Death, I will be thy death; hell, I will be thy bite.” So Christ assures us through the mouth of the prophet. This was fulfilled by the painful death on the cross, from which He arose, the Victor. The joyful Alleluia reminds us of this. It is the cry of jubilee of the Church triumphant in heaven; and tells us also that, if we wish to celebrate Easter with Christ and all the blessed in heaven, we must, while members of the militant Church, combat and conquer with her.

What will particularly encourage us to combat as children of God is the thought of Christ, the Conqueror; and, my dearest brethren, all that intensifies the joy of victory beams forth in an infinitely more perfect manner in this brilliant triumph which Jesus gained over death and hell.

The joy of the triumph re-echoes in the Alleluia which He intoned when He arose glorious and immortal from the tomb.

O Mary, who, by crushing the serpent's head, didst vanquish hell, assist us, that we may do so too; and thus rejoice with thee in the triumph of the Church for all eternity!

I speak in the name of the Risen Jesus, for the greater honor and glory of God!

When the children of Israel, protected and led by the hand of the Almighty God, crossed the Red Sea, a few days subsequent to the celebration of Easter, according to the command of God, and witnessed the terrible destruction of Pharaoh and his whole army, they lifted up their voices and sang the hymn of praise and thanksgiving to the Lord which Moses, His faithful servant, had taught them:

“Sing praise to the Lord, Who giveth glory unto Himself. Horses and riders He cast into the sea. His name is Almighty. The justice of the Lord has exalted itself; His enemy is destroyed. His kingdom endures from eternity to eternity.” This hymn of joy

and praise was sung by Mary, the sister of Moses and Aaron, and all the women of Israel; and then the strain was taken up by six hundred thousand men, and never before, nor since, has the world heard such a glorious song of praise.

But in heaven, ah, yes! in heaven will be sung a hymn of praise which will never end—a joyful chant more glorious far than this, to celebrate the triumph of Christ over Lucifer and his infernal hosts. Ah, yes! the Alleluia which the risen Lord, in the majesty of His power and glory, entones with the whole celestial choir and the valiant army of sanctified souls, in commemoration of His victory, surpasses by far the song of praise which the Israelites, rescued from Egyptian power, poured forth unto the Lord.

What increased the joy of this grateful people, as they stood upon the shores of Egypt's dark sea, was, above all, the imminence of the danger from which they had been delivered.

For we all know full well that the more *numerous* and *powerful* the enemy who suffers defeat, the more enthusiastic are the demonstrations of the conquerors. Now Pharaoh, with his powerful troops arrayed in armor, pursued the Israelites with the utmost haste, exulting in the fact that the chosen people of God were not prepared for war; moreover, they were surrounded by their terrified wives and wailing children, whom they expected to see slaughtered before their eyes, or led once more into a captivity worse than death.

When, therefore, they beheld their relentless foe stricken down by the arm of the Lord,—buried in the waters of the Red Sea,—when they knew that the tyrant and his minions lay lifeless in its turbid depths, their overwhelming delight at this unlooked-for delivery can not be described.

What exalts the feelings of triumph of a victorious army is the fact that they have conquered in spite of the many exterior circumstances and dangers which utterly took away the hope of being so fortunate as to defeat the foe. It was thus with the children of Israel. The dark shadows of night were beginning to close around, enshrouding the weary wanderers in a sable pall. Before them, darkness and gloom; behind, the terrible foe. The mighty throng, they felt, was drawing nearer and nearer, to crush them with the weight of their strength. And yet, upon what a different scene did the sun of the morrow look down! The Lord, in His power, had called on the waves to divide, while the Israelites passed to the opposite shore; and, when the pursuer and his satellites rushed madly across, they united once more, and the Egyptians were buried in the depths of the sea. What jubilant gratitude was felt by the Israelites at this unexpected deliverance! The more, because God had freed them from a miserable state of bondage, and led them to the possession of a land in which they could live in comfort, and amply provide for their children and their children's children. Yes, they beheld themselves rescued from that slavery in which

the long, long weary days dragged so slowly on in marching to Canaan, the dear land of their fathers—the land flowing with milk and honey—where they need fear neither oppression nor want.

Their rejoicing was the more perfect because they felt assured that, after having wrought so wonderful a miracle in their favor, the Lord would go on and protect them, and victoriously conduct them to the promised land.

But what was this victory, and the triumphant hymn by which it was proclaimed, in comparison with that which the Lord Jesus obtained for us, and the Alleluia which resounded through the lofty dome of heaven when Christ arose from death? It was not one army alone which He defeated, for His combat was waged with the devil and numberless hosts of fallen spirits. He wrestled against these united powers—the world, the flesh; against those irregular desires which, as St. Paul teaches, have dwelt in our members since the fall of Adam, and whose attacks we must constantly suffer. What a splendid victory we have gained through Christ!

The children of Israel did not fight. God delivered them miraculously. Christ, on the contrary, fought and was victorious. Therefore the merits and the joy were the greater on account of His dearly-bought triumph.

The peril of the Israelites was great, but the Lord delivered them. Alas! the dangers of salvation which have encompassed the soul since the fall of Adam, and

through which we are exposed to innumerable temptations and individual sins, are immeasurably greater.

But Christ has come to the rescue, and through Him, the Conqueror Who combats with and in us, we are enabled to trample under foot those dangers and burst the bonds of sin,—even as our Redeemer burst open the bonds of the grave and called upon us to trust in Him Who had vanquished the world.

The triumph of God's chosen people delivered them from Egyptian *bondage* and the miseries of an enslaved race: but the victory of Christ rescued us from the pains of hell and the thralldom of Satan.

The hymn entoned by them as they stood on the shores of the Red Sea was a hymn of joy and exultation, because they knew that victory would lead them to a fertile and lovely country;—but the soft verdure of Canaan was also dotted with graves. The curse of original sin rested also on Canaan: "In the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat thy bread;" whereas the country which Christ obtained for us is heaven—an eternity of delight, God Himself our future possession.

The triumph of the children of Israel was for one nation only; the victory of Christ was for every nation on the face of the earth—for the eternal salvation of *all* who are of good-will, and who will walk in this world following Christ by the practise of those virtues which are symbolized by the manner in which the children of Israel left Egypt and pursued their journey to Canaan.

First, they must kill the Paschal lamb and sprinkle

their doors with its blood, that the destroying angel might pass them by.—What are we to learn from this? Christian souls, if you seek for salvation, you must destroy sin in your hearts—blot it out by contrition and confession. Reconcile yourselves with your Creator in the sacrament of Penance, and be purified in the blood of the Lamb.

The children of Israel were commanded to leave Egypt; and you, O Christians, if you would celebrate Easter in heaven, your watch-word must be, too, “Away from Egypt!” That is, you must avoid sin and its occasions, remembering the admonition of Christ: “If your eye scandalize you, pluck it out; if your hand or foot scandalize you, cut it off.” In other words, if not your eye, your hand or foot, but any thing as dear and precious, would be to you an occasion of sin, you must most certainly give it up.

The Israelites partook of the Paschal lamb *standing* and in *haste*, as if to set out on a long journey. If you would celebrate Easter with Christ in heaven, learn from this to free your hearts from all desire of possessing the goods and plunging into the pleasures of this world. Learn to *stand*, and not to *sit*; that is, to fix your thoughts on heavenly things, and to keep ever before you that eternity to which you are hastening. Learn also to participate even in the innocent enjoyments of life, as if expecting to be summoned away. Be not troubled about many things, nor live as if there were no other world than this one in which Providence now permits us to live.

The *shoes* indicate a life of determined resolution and unfaltering piety, while the *staff* which the Israelites held in their hands signifies the consciousness which supports us, and refers our every action to God. One thing alone is necessary—to serve our Creator and work out our salvation.

Over the Israelites hung a cloud to guide them on their perilous journey, which at night assumed the form of a pillar of fire to cast light on their way. Over the camp of the Egyptians it threw such a shadow that it was completely enveloped in darkness. This cloud signifies the word of divine revelation, the word of holy faith as it is announced to us by the Church; and it matters not if Lucifer, with all the powers of hell, the temptations of the flesh and the seductions of the world pursue us, the hand of the Lord is with us.

Christ has said that “No one can snatch those from Me whom the Father hath intrusted to Me.” That is, beloved in Christ, those who avail themselves of the spiritual weapons which God gives through the Church to all her members, in order to vanquish.

Children of the Church! if we in spirit listen to the joyous strains of the “Alleluia” which, on the occasion of the victory of the Risen Jesus, the Church entones, we will feel encouraged to fight the battle of salvation as did millions of souls who have already gone before us with the sign of faith, and who rest in Christ.

Oh, what bliss to celebrate with Jesus, His blessed Mother, and the whole celestial choir, the “Feast of glorious Victory” forever in Heaven!—Amen!

FEAST OF THE ASCENSION.

FIRST SERMON.

“And the Lord Jesus was taken up into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of God.”—Mark xvi, 19.

THE various feasts which we, as children of the Church, are called upon to celebrate throughout the year, invite us to consider, with special attention, and, as it were, to behold in spirit the mysteries of which that tender Mother makes mention herself, in so solemn a manner to us all.

This is particularly so on the festival of to-day, which commemorates the Ascension of Christ into heaven. We gaze with the disciples into the cloudless sky as if we fain would pierce the secrets of the celestial realm beyond, and witness the entrance of Christ therein. Then the thought arises within us: “O happy Apostles! chosen to behold the Ascension of the Lord; would that we could know the feelings which filled your hearts when you saw Him surrounded by a luminous cloud, disappear from view.”

Beloved in Christ Jesus, I will tell you: Unspeakable longing after heaven took possession of them when they beheld their beloved Master enter therein. The same longing should also fill our heart.

O Mary, Queen of heaven, obtain for us that same longing which animated your immaculate heart, to follow your divine Son to the abode of eternal bliss.

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus for the greater honor and glory of God.

As I have already said, the feelings of the disciples, as they stood gazing upon Jesus as he faded from their view, were concentrated in one ardent desire for heaven, to be and remain with him there forever.

Yes; and so also would we have felt had we been present on Mount Olivet with Mary, the Apostles and disciples, when Christ raised Himself from the ground, blessed them, and, soaring aloft, was seen no more.

“Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye looking up to heaven?” was the question put to them by the Angels; and, my brethren, had I been present, I would have said: “O dear Angels, how can you ask? for, while the favored few, whom Christ selected to witness His wondrous ascension, did certainly congratulate Jesus upon entering His eternal home, they also sighed, from their very hearts, ‘O that we, too, could leave this earth, to be and remain with our beloved Saviour in heaven.’”

This ardent desire is the more important because it is the fundamental condition without which we can not follow the admonition contained in the succeeding words spoken by the angelic messengers: “This Jesus,

Who is taken up from you, so shall come again." He will exact a rigid account from every man as to whether he has fulfilled that end for which God called him into existence, redeemed him, and permitted him to belong to the kingdom of His Church.

Upon the eve of His Ascension, Christ declared that He would send His disciples to the confines of the earth; and that they might be better enabled to proclaim His word, He would prepare them with the strength of the Holy Ghost. For only those who combat and conquer, who work for and with Jesus, who complete the work on earth for which God created them, and remain faithful, receive a beautiful crown in heaven.

Besides the strength God the Holy Ghost bestows, that divine Spirit also implants in the heart another disposition—a longing to accomplish something for God. This is confirmed by numerous examples of heroic actions, performed by those who, devoting their lives to sanctity, listened to and acted upon the inspirations of that divine Spirit. What wonderful things have been accomplished, even according to the testimony of our own experience, at the price of innumerable sacrifices and hardships, from the impulse and through the strength of this ardent desire! This has also its perfect application in the great affair of salvation.

Whoever meditates as he should upon heaven, feels strong enough to labor, to struggle, and to suffer for it, in faithful perseverance, unto the end. And what

should be more easy than for every faithful child of the Church to excite in his heart this *longing* desire? Consider how many and what powerful motives there are to increase it therein! Let us devote some moments to these considerations; and with the divine blessing, even as the words fall from my lips, this desire for heaven will arise and increase in our hearts.

Behold, in spirit, Christ ascending to heaven, and say, within yourselves, Dear Jesus, where are you going? O beautiful *country*! how I sigh after thee.

Here is the land of our exile; there, our eternal home.

Here are hunger and thirst; there, an excess of delight.

Here, lamentation and wailing; there, the security of bliss.

Here is poverty and nakedness; there, the glorious vesture of heaven, decorated with the diamonds of merit, acquired by our good works upon earth. Here we have no lasting dwelling; there, when the Christian enters upon the reward of a well-spent life, he can exclaim: "Heaven is mine; all is mine; I enter the dwelling which Jesus prepared for me, and ascend a royal throne, whereon I will be crowned with a radiant diadem forever."

Here there is a never-ceasing sound of wailing, as human hearts grow faint with the burden of sorrow; there, in heaven, the eternal Alleluia resounds, and never for one moment does the celestial music of angelic voices cease.

Here is the labor; there, rest and quiet—the reward; and O what a reward! Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard; nor hath it ever entered into the heart of man to conceive what God hath prepared for those who love Him.

Here we must endure mortification and persecution; there, we shall enjoy a peace which passeth all understanding.

Here we are subject to temptations; there, no thought of evil can come.

Here it is constant struggle; there, is the triumph attained.

Here the world, and those who are of the world, strive only for the possession of *creatures*; there, the sole desire of the blessed is to see and possess *God* Himself in His infinite perfection and beatitude.

Here a shadow rests upon our brightest hours,—the thought of the impending separation from our loved ones by death; there, neither sorrow nor death can enter; and the union among the blessed and with God will be eternal.

Blessed Egidius! when we think of these striking contrasts, we can not wonder that the very mention of heaven—“*Paradise*”—threw your soul into an ecstatic state, while your ardent desire after its joys raised your body from the ground as if your spirit longed to soar.

Yes, beautiful Heaven! the ardent desire of my heart, who will give me wings like a dove, to fly from this valley of tears, and rest on the mountain of bliss?

But this necessitates labor, struggling, suffering. And what, beloved in Christ, will make this suffering light? what but this ardent desire of heaven!

See the laborer as he goes forth to his daily toil, willing to endure all, and leave himself no rest, for he knows that the more diligently he works, the greater will be his gain. And daily experience proves, that it is the same in every walk of life; yet how poor and trifling, how infinitely small, is the richest guerdon which the world can give compared to the reward which awaits us in heaven for every meritorious work performed by us on earth. How worthless should the world's rewards appear when we think how soon they pass away! How infinitely great should we deem the ones which never, never end! How brave and determined the warrior who knows that, if he return from the conflict with the laurel wreath of victory, his fortune is assured! How willingly he risks that life, which is to him so precious, for the hope of a possible reward. How bravely, therefore, my dearest Christians, should *not you* be able to combat, having in view the hope of Heaven—the crown of eternal victory!

Men have borne, with the greatest patience, the most painful operations, with a view to saving life or limb. Strive, therefore, to bear with patience the sorrows and trials of earth, to save your immortal souls. Oh, let us never forget the heaven which may be all our own! Let us think of it, not only while we celebrate this glorious festival, but long after it

has passed away, that we may so live that, when we close our eyes to earthly things, we may, without delay, ascend to that bright and glorious home to dwell with Christ in Heaven for evermore.—
Amen.

SECOND SERMON.

"They going forth preached every-where, and the Lord working withal, confirming the word with signs that followed."—Mark xvi, 20.

JESUS had entered into glory, and still the disciples remained spell-bound, gazing after Him with irrepressible yearning to follow Him to that heavenly home, whither He went to prepare a dwelling for the souls He had redeemed.

Suddenly, as the Evangelist St. Luke relates, there appeared to the Apostles two Angels clad in white robes of golden glory, who thus addressed them: "Ye men of Galilee, why stand you looking up to heaven? This Jesus, who is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come, as you have seen Him going into heaven." This is the explanation of the above: "As surely as you have witnessed the departure of your blessed Saviour, so surely will He come again. He will come not in His humiliation, but in the full splendor of His incomparable Majesty, to you, as well as to the whole world."

Jesus raised Himself on high and entered heaven as Conqueror over death and hell; and once again He will come, not as Reconciler, but as Judge. Can we endure the penetrating glance of His all-seeing eye; that eye which will, as it were, search into the very marrow of our souls? It depends very much upon ourselves.

If we have during life been disposed as were the dis-

ciples on Mount Olivet on Ascension-day, there will be no terror for us in the coming of Christ at the end of the world.

O Mary, Queen of angels, to whom it was granted to be assumed body and soul into heaven, and to sit enthroned at the right hand of your divine Son, bless and protect us, that we may one day behold the bliss of heaven !

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, for the greater honor of God !

Deep in the human heart there lingers sweet hope of ascending at last to heaven. There is scarce a sinner, be he ever so abandoned, that does not cherish the hope that by some unlooked-for grace he will behold his glorified Saviour. It is true that sincere, even if tardy, repentance can win forgiveness for any crime, no matter how great ; yet we must not expect to be called by wonderful ways ; but, to insure to ourselves the eventual possession of that exquisite bliss, we must, during our whole lives, look up to heaven with affections similar to those of the disciples as they looked after Jesus when He soared aloft beyond the skies. It was, above all, the wish to enter heaven with Him which animated them when they, after He had disappeared from their view, stood spell-bound, looking up as if they could still behold His beloved face. I have already touched upon this disposition of ardent desire, but after the address of the

angels there were other affections which deeply moved their hearts.

First, they *congratulated* Jesus upon His entrance into glory. In proportion to the compassion with which His humiliation and bitter sufferings had inspired them, they now rejoiced; and repressing their grief at His departure, felicitated Him upon having ascended to heaven.

They stood upon Mount Olivet, that spot so rich in sacred memories,—that spot where the agony of the Son of God forced blood from His pores. Their feet touched the ground once moistened by that precious blood; and with these thoughts welling up in their hearts, they might well exclaim: “According to the afflictions of my heart, consolations have rejoiced my soul.”

The disciples rejoiced with Jesus, especially at the assurance He gave them: “I go to prepare for you a lasting dwelling,” and now they perceived more clearly than ever the grand and majestic character of the happiness which had been conferred upon them, of beholding the incarnate Son of God,—that happiness after which Abraham and the prophets had so ardently longed,—yet which they were not permitted to enjoy, with the exception of Moses and Elias.

They now understood the favor which had been meted out to them, and blessed the Saviour that they had received from His lips the word of salvation; that they had walked by His side, and had had constant personal intercourse with Him. They thanked Him with

the most intense fervor of heart for their call to the true faith, and for their election, according to the Saviour's promise, to proclaim the word of life to the very extremities of the earth, and to distribute to the children of men the treasures of the Redemption, by propagating the true Church to which had been bequeathed such fruitful means of salvation.

And it was not merely *sensible* affections of the heart which so deeply moved them; for they, at the same time, made firm resolutions, with the assistance of divine grace, to fulfill their calling faithfully, and to obey the precept which had been given them, to await at Jerusalem, in prayer, the coming of the Holy Ghost, the Paraclete. And this, my brethren, should be the disposition of our hearts upon this glorious day.

Let us exult and praise the Lord for His Majesty; for if we love Jesus more than ourselves, we should rejoice at His Ascension to such a kingdom of delight. What exultation must expand the heart of the Christian who really loves Him, as he recalls to-day the words of the psalm which prophetically describes the Ascension of Christ: "Be ye lifted up, O eternal gates, for the King of Glory approaches!" and behold in spirit the myriads of Angels coming from heaven to meet him, entoning the Alleluia of victory before the Lord.

We should also imitate the Apostles and disciples in their *gratitude*; for if we reflect that we have been called to the true faith through no merit of our own, while the souls of millions who might have responded

more fully to the grace of God, and availed themselves more frequently of the means provided by Him to help us on our heavenward way, are left in the darkness of error. What cause for thankfulness is the certainty that we are on the right path to salvation, and that if we really wish to attain it, we can do so through Jesus Christ our Lord. We should also thank God that we, as children of the true Church, may lead other souls thereto, and thus propagate His kingdom. There is no other way to heaven than that which Jesus trod, the way of struggle, labor, and toil,—of self-denial, mortification, and tears—no other way, in short, than the royal road of the holy *cross*.

But heaven is worth it all, and when well nigh fainting in the conflict, the Christian should think of the Saviour, Who, in His painful walk to Calvary, faltered and fell three times; and, taking courage, exclaim with St. Paul: "I can do all in Him who strengthens me." The same Holy Ghost, promised and sent by Christ to His Apostles and disciples; He has, according to St. John, promised to us also; and He will send Him if we, by zealous and fervent prayer, prepare our hearts for His reception. The Apostles and their companions at Jerusalem did so.

And after that happy event they immediately ordained deacons for the service of the Church, that they might themselves have more time for prayer and union with God.

Let us, then, beloved in Christ, imitate their example, by an increase of zeal in *prayer*, as we celebrate

this festive day. Let us, in spirit, place ourselves in their midst, and imagine the deep emotion with which we would have fallen at the feet of Christ and embraced them, had we been witnesses of this happy meeting between Him and His holy Mother, and faithful friends. With what ardor we would have implored Him to remember us before His Father in heaven, and promised to do His holy will in all things, that we might one day follow Him to the realms of everlasting bliss.

If we possess these affections, and fulfill the resolutions arising therefrom; if we think constantly of heaven, and live only for it, then most assuredly will we courageously combat those enemies who would fain deprive us of its celestial joys; and having borne the cross on earth, we shall wear an eternal crown above.—Amen!

THIRD SERMON.

“And He was taken up to heaven.”—Mark xvi, 19.

BELOVED in Christ, as often as we think of the Ascension of our Lord a shadow falls upon our hearts, because the Church has been deprived of His visible presence.

“Your hearts are troubled,” said Christ to His disciples, “for I have told you that I would leave you ; but be consoled, for I will soon come again.” And this is indeed the way in which we always seek to console ourselves at parting with those we fondly love: “We soon shall meet again.”

Our hearts, too, like those of the disciples, feel deeply grieved to think that Jesus left us behind. We feel that to have had Him here in person would have been a most precious boon. But still there is solace in the thought: “It will not last forever, for we will live so as to meet Him again, to be united with Him forever.”

There is another source of consolation still, and that is the sublime and incomprehensible truth that, although He left us, He still remains in our midst. “I go, yet remain with you,” He said to His disciples, and, through them, to all who believe in Him, hope in Him, and love Him to the end of time.

Jesus abides now personally in Heaven in all His majesty and glory, seated at the right hand of His Father.

But at the same time, although hidden under the mystic veils of bread and wine, He abides with us in Person on earth, and, by the ineffable sweetness of His presence, transforms this earth, for those who love Him, into a Paradise of delights.

O Mary, to whom the angel said, "The Lord is with thee," obtain for us the grace to dwell in the most intimate union with thy divine Son, that, while still on earth, we may once taste His bliss in Heaven!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, for the greater honor and glory of God!

Jesus has ascended into heaven, and yet He remains with us, first, as Head of the Church. She is His mystical body, as we are assured by the Apostles and by the testimony of the Fathers.

Christ Himself refers to His spiritual presence on earth in His holy Church, where, at the conclusion of the Gospel of St. Matthew, He says: "Behold, I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world." The certainty of this should dispel the shadow which fell upon all those devoted to Jesus when He ascended to heaven, even though we might think that, had He remained with us in His visible presence, we could the more easily have worked out our salvation; for there is an illusion in this. Christ in heaven is equally aware of our many wants, and knows fully as well the warfare in which we must constantly engage; He knows the many snares, laid by His enemy

and ours, to surprise us into some sin, the commission of which would give us over to the power of the devil. Christ in heaven knows the sorrows that encompass us, the desolation that so often overshadows our lives, the uncertainty we feel in regard to our eternal fate. He knows it all, and He is waiting to help us.

“All power is given to Me in heaven and on earth.” So Christ has most solemnly assured us, and He has also told us of the great benefit which His Ascension would confer upon man. “I will send you the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of consolation, the Spirit of truth, the Spirit of strength, to remain with you forever.” A twofold—a threefold source of grace for the sanctification and deliverance of your souls shall be poured upon you after My Ascension, through God the Father, God the Holy Ghost, and through *Me*, the eternal Son, your Redeemer. I am the Source whence the prayers you pour forth to God obtain their victorious power,—through Whom the offering on your altars so infinitely glorifies the Triune God,—through Whom the holy Sacraments receive the grace which they impart to the soul.

To this invisible presence of Christ, which sanctifies, directs, and fortifies, are to be referred the words of St. Augustine when he declares that it is properly Christ Himself Who distributes, through His priests, graces and spiritual favors to us. He says: “Peter baptizes, Paul baptizes, Judas baptizes, but Christ baptizes in them.”

Behold, therefore, the wonderful power, the mighty

effects of Christ's presence on earth, although visibly He is throned only in heaven, and we do not behold Him with our corporeal eyes.

I will illustrate this by a comparison, and say, although a person in power, upon whom we depend for help, may live in a far-off land, this will not interfere with his power to aid. Nay, if we can communicate with him, ask advice, and beg his assistance, it is the same as if he lived near by. This is especially so if he is able and willing to aid and grant our request.—Thus it is with Christ as the life-giving Head of the Church on earth. At one time He preached and ministered only in Palestine, but now His mission extends over the whole world by the promulgation of His doctrine and the administration of graces by means of the sacerdotal office, which will remain in the Church until the end of time.

Yes, Christ indeed ascended to heaven, but, nevertheless, He is still on earth personally, and He will remain unto the end of time; but in a more intimate and essential union than if He had stayed with us in a visible manner. He might indeed have said: "Let Me go hence, for you will be more blessed by My invisible presence in the Blessed Sacrament, which all my faithful children can receive."

Yes, beloved in the Lord Jesus, Christ is as truly and essentially present in body and soul, divinity and humanity, and that for our blessing and salvation, as He is present on the throne of His glory in heaven. He prayed always for us while He lived on earth, and

now from His little abode, the tabernacle, His prayer forever ascends to his heavenly Father for the souls He has redeemed.

There was but one occasion on which Christ visibly offered the holy sacrifice of the Mass. Now, really present in the Eucharist, the clean oblation is offered by His ministers from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same ; and that not *once*, but by numberless priests, over the whole globe often at one and the same time.

While on earth Jesus bestowed Himself but once on His disciples in Holy Communion ; while now the numbers who receive Him, and the times they are so favored, can scarcely be reckoned. Every Christian who knows what happiness it is to have his Lord really present in the Blessed Sacrament as offered up in the Mass, and as received by the faithful, and avails himself of the privilege with the love and fervor of St. John—who abides with Him by visiting and receiving the Holy Eucharist—will feel the truth of what St. Teresa said when she appeared to one of her spiritual daughters : “O my child, what have we in heaven of which you have not already here the foretaste through the presence of Christ in the Most Holy Sacrament of the altar?”

In conclusion, although visibly taken up to heaven, yet Christ remains among us on earth, in our hearts, if we can say with truth : “Jesus, my all, my only thought, my only desire, my consolation, my strength and delight, my God and my all !” And if we show by

our lives that we wish nothing so much as to fulfill the holy will of God, then, my dear brethren, that solemn promise, "I and the Father will come and abide with him," will be fulfilled in us.

If this be so, oh, then the arid desert of life will change for us, through this invisible presence of Christ, into a Paradise of joys, where we will have no reason to mourn that He has left us; but rather, according to His own assurance, to rejoice!

What though for a few brief years we are deprived of the privilege of beholding Christ on earth; we can enjoy His *real* presence by a loving intercourse with Him in the Blessed Sacrament!

This intimate union will enable us to amass such treasures of merit that we shall one day taste the sweets of the divine beatitude in a more superabundant measure, united through Him with God the Father, God the Holy Ghost, with Mary, and all the saints.—Amen!

FEAST OF PENTECOST SUNDAY.

FIRST SERMON.

“And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost.”—Acts ii, 4.

“AND He commanded that they should not depart from Jerusalem; but should wait for the promise of the Father, which you have heard,” said He, “by My mouth, that you may give testimony of Me, even to the uttermost bounds of the earth.” Thus runs the admonition of the Lord before His ascension. (Acts i, 4–8.)

The Apostles, therefore, with Mary, the Mother of Jesus, and many of His disciples, obeying the command of Christ, remained at Jerusalem, united in prayer; and, behold, after ten days, the promise of Christ was fulfilled: “Suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting; and the Holy Ghost came down upon them in the form of fiery tongues, and sat upon every one of them.”

Then did this Spirit of light replenish their souls with knowledge, power, and love; and enrich them with His sevenfold gifts. St. Paul says of himself,

that the same Lord Who decreed that there should be light, caused the light of knowledge in holy faith to irradiate his soul; and so it was with the disciples assembled at Jerusalem. Their understanding seemed darkened; they were faint-hearted and timid since the ascension of Him Who was at once their Lord, their Saviour, and beloved Friend. They remained secluded—"behind bolt and bar,"—not daring to appear in public; but, lo! that fear suddenly vanished, for seven new and most precious gifts were bestowed upon them.

With unfaltering courage they went forth to proclaim the truths of Christianity, and to preach "Christ crucified" to the same people who had been guilty of His death upon the cross; and the grace of God touched the hearts of that vast multitude, as they listened, with rapt attention, to their inspired words. Thousands were converted on the spot; and the Church celebrated her birthday on earth, and extended her mission, from that very day, to the utmost limits of the globe.

There can be no greater happiness on earth, beloved in Christ, than the privilege of belonging to the true Church—the only one in which salvation is to be found. But mere external membership will not confer it upon us. We must become living temples of the Holy Ghost, letting our faith shine forth in our lives with a luster so brilliant that it will attract numberless souls to the fold of Christ. The seven gifts, with which the Holy Ghost enriches all who worthily re-

ceive the Sacrament of Confirmation, will produce this effect in our souls.

Let us consider to day in what essentially consists each one of these, and see in what manner they influence the uninterrupted duration of the kingdom of God in our souls.

O Mary, obtain for us, from the Holy Ghost, thy divine Spouse, the grace to retain in our hearts the influence of His sevenfold gifts!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, for the greater honor and glory of God!

St. John says: "Thus spoke Christ of the Holy Spirit, whom every one that believes in Him shall receive."

The miracle which God vouchsafed to work on Pentecost Sunday, namely, the descent of the Holy Ghost upon the Apostles, was a peculiar grace conferred upon those companions of Jesus Christ, as was also the extraordinary gift of speaking in divers tongues, and penetrating, with prophetic vision, the mysteries of the future. Yes, my brethren, these were gifts of the Holy Ghost, indeed, but reserved for the Apostles *alone*, apart from those sevenfold gifts which that divine Spirit confers upon all who worthily receive the Sacrament of Confirmation. Through this Spirit of love, the Apostles communicated them to all the faithful, to whom, after their baptism, they administered this Sacrament, as the Acts of the Apostles certify. •

What are the effects of this Sacrament? It strengthens us in our determination to belong to the kingdom of Christ—the kingdom of God—the Holy Church; to live as her children; to propagate the faith according to our strength and ability; and even, should God require it of us, to sacrifice life itself rather than be false to its teachings. That we may be enabled to do all this, we must not only receive the Sacrament of Confirmation *exteriorly*; but the *graces* it confers must penetrate to the very depths of our hearts.

Let us consider to-day in what the essence of each of these gifts consists; and we will arrive at a clearer understanding of the relation which each one of them bears toward the continuance and increase of the kingdom of God in our hearts.

The *first* gift—in the order in which they are imparted to us—is “*Fear of the Lord*,” which so disposes our hearts that we entertain no fear whatever, except of God, and the possibility of offending that Divine Being by sin. This gift implies a heart free from sin and filled with a true, sincere, and effective resolution to avoid the most trivial venial sin and imperfection.

When this gift fills our hearts, then indeed the kingdom of God is firmly established therein, and we are temples of the Holy Ghost. But, alas! how many there are who receive not this heavenly gift in its plenitude; who waver and falter in the service of God; and who, so far from being inspired by a holy fear of offending Him, rather allow the fear of men, or human respect, to take entire control of their actions.

The *second* gift of the Holy Ghost is *Piety*, which leads us to a state of perpetual prayer, so that we not only perform our prescribed devotions at certain times, but, through them, become united in so intimate a manner with God that we walk constantly in His presence, and live so that the salutation of the angel to the Immaculate Virgin: "The Lord is with thee," might well be applied to us.

As long as prayer is regarded by us only in the light of an obligation, we are yet very imperfect children of God; but if, on the contrary, we find it an absolute necessity—if it be for our spirits, what breath is to the body—then is the kingdom of God firm in our hearts; then are we indeed confirmed in the service of our Creator, and living temples of the Holy Ghost. O how many are there who waver in this holy service! The spirit of prayer is wanting in them; their devotions bring them no nearer to God, whereas they should tend to promote an intimate union with Him.

The *third* gift of the Holy Ghost is *Knowledge*, through which we become versed in the science of salvation, and thoroughly impressed with the truth, that the great affair of our eternal welfare should first rank in our estimation; and become fully resolved that nothing shall prevent the permanent establishment of the kingdom of God in our hearts. This heavenly knowledge renders us fully alive to the perils which threaten the salvation of those who, while living in the world, strive always, according to the spirit of the world, to possess and to enjoy; and this always in an

ever-increasing degree, and for as long a time as possible.

Not so the Christian whose soul, enriched by God the Holy Ghost, is filled with this holy science. He will continually have in view the warning of our Lord: "What doth it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" And when the tempter places before him some favorite, though forbidden, pleasure, or paints in glowing colors the joys of yielding to some darling sin, he will pause and ask himself that question, Will I spurn the tempter from my heart or not?

When the charms of earthly pleasures and temporal enjoyments were held up to St. Aloysius, by those who wished to make him waver in his resolution to dedicate himself to God in the religious state, he would silence them by asking: "What doth it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his own soul?"—Such a soul recognizes the value of time, and employs it accordingly, knowing well that death, which is most surely approaching, is but the pathway to an eternity, which it depends upon him to make happy or miserable.

The Christian who entertains such sentiments will remain firm and unshaken amid the tempests of life, and may feel assured that the kingdom of God is established in his heart. But by far the greater number who call themselves children of the one true Church, and have even received the Sacrament of Confirmation, do not respond to the dignity of their vocation. Carried away entirely by the affairs of the world, their

only anxiety is for pleasure, or for gain—for the things of earth which pass away.

The *fourth* gift, with which we are favored by the munificence of the Holy Ghost, is *Counsel*. This gift floods the soul with celestial light sufficient to discern what is pleasing to God in the various circumstances of life.

It guards us against the evil of seeking advice from vain and worldly minds, and inspires us to go directly to the representatives of Christ on earth.

The life of the Christian who receives this gift is blessed with that peace which the world can not give, and, God reigning in his heart by His grace, the divine kingdom is firmly established therein.

But too many go in quest of advice from those who are filled with the spirit of the world, and who can not impart what they do not possess; and instead of receiving benefit, the petitioner wavers in the service of God; nay, sometimes abandons it entirely.

The *fifth* gift of the Holy Ghost is *Fortitude*, which enables the recipient to embrace, and bear patiently, all the crosses which are inseparable from that state of life, to which he has been called by the most holy will of God, and to fulfill the duties connected therewith, in spite of every obstacle. From this gift also arises that disposition which inspires the soul with an esteem for tribulations, a love of sufferings, and an ardent desire to bear the cross for the sake of Jesus Christ. Whoever is thus disposed may

enjoy the blessed assurance that the kingdom of God is confirmed in his heart, and that, by a faithful correspondence with divine grace, he will combat valiantly and bear away the palm of victory.

Where, however, this steadfast love of sufferings through love of Christ exists not, the prayer, "Thy kingdom come," arises not as much from the heart, but from the lips only; and the kingdom of God is often endangered.

The *sixth* gift which the Holy Spirit offers us, in the Sacrament of Confirmation, is *Understanding*, which enables man to look at, and judge every thing in this world, through the light of holy faith, and to live accordingly. In this way his confession of faith will not proceed from the lips only, but all its teachings will appear, in a manner most clear and distinct, to his spiritual vision. The kingdom of God is truly and firmly established in that blessed soul, and grace will constantly increase therein, to enable her to resist all the attacks of the infernal enemy. Then will the purity of her intention exalt and multiply the merit of her good works before God.

O that all would endeavor, by a worthy preparation for the Sacrament of Confirmation, to receive this gift in its plenitude! But too often it is not the case.

Finally, the *seventh* gift is the gift of *Wisdom*, which is essentially the gift of well-ordered love to God and our neighbor, by which the Christian finds his delight in the fulfillment of the precept which enjoins upon us to love God above all, and our neigh-

bor as ourselves. Of such love it is written that it is stronger than death. It induces us to give up all earthly joys and worldly treasures for Christ's dear sake; and whoever is aware of possessing it, may well exclaim, with St. Paul: "What can separate us from the love of Christ? Hunger, misery, poverty, death; we overcome them all through Him whom we love."

But, beloved Christians, when every portion of the heart is engrossed by *self*, there can be no thought of faithful perseverance amid the storms and temptations of life. What weighty and all-powerful motives should on this glorious day, the birthday of our Holy Church, inspire us to assemble in spirit, with the Mother of Jesus and the holy Apostles and disciples of the Lord, as they awaited the descent of the divine Spirit. From the very depths of our hearts let us cry out: "Come, Holy Ghost, replenish our hearts with Thy love, that its ardent fire may animate our souls. Banish therefrom all aversion to prayer, and that spirit of the world which seeks our ruin. Banish from our hearts all unrest, faint-heartedness, forgetfulness of the truths of faith; above all, of the four last things which await us: Death, Judgment, Heaven, and Hell. Cast from our hearts the spirit of self-love, and lead us, through thy sevenfold gifts, to love God above all, and in Him all whom He has created for Himself; and so confirm these dispositions in our hearts, that we may become, and remain Thy living temples, sanctified through thy love for all eternity."—**Amen.**

SECOND SERMON.

“For the Prince of this world cometh, and in Me he hath not any thing.”
—John xiv, 30.

THE Church of God, the kingdom of light, celebrates to-day the feast of her establishment on earth, of her birthday, for the blessing and benefit of the human race. Although, my dear brethren, all mankind have been, since the day of creation, universally called to honor God, to love and serve Him, and He has vouchsafed to them messengers to lead them to the way of salvation, there is, on the other hand, a kingdom of darkness which opposes the kingdom of light with all its powers,—blinds, and endeavors to destroy souls, and makes every effort to propagate the kingdom of evil.

The Prince of the realm of light is *Christ*; the ruler of the region of darkness is *Satan*. The latter is fittingly styled by the fathers, the “Ape of God;” and daring to look with an envious eye upon “the honor” which belongs to the Lord, he seeks to attract a similar homage to himself. Knowing well that God works in the most efficacious manner to attain the end for which He created man, Satan tries to imitate Him in His plans, not for the welfare, but for the damnation of souls.

He leaves nothing untried to accomplish this darling project, seeking continually new victims to draw

into his toils, hardening their hearts, and leading their souls to perdition.

As the Holy Ghost seeks, by the characteristic gifts which He imparts, to confirm the good in all that is pure and holy; so does Satan endeavor, through gifts of an entirely opposite nature, to confirm the bad in every thing vile and wicked.

To-day we will consider this diabolical confirmation, and the seven gifts which strengthen those who receive it in every thing bad.

O Mary, dearest of mothers, obtain for us grace to secure our salvation while God grants us time for the work!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, for the greater honor and glory of God!

“But the sinner, when he falls into the depths, despises.” These are the words of the Holy Ghost, and it is the constant aim of the evil one to drag him into such fathomless depths, that at last he cares not whether he is saved or not. Day and night goes about this spirit of malice seeking whom he may confirm in malice. Yet do not lose courage, beloved in Christ! Even though he should induce you to sin, call upon God, repent, and you can regain what you have lost. But to prevent this the devil will try to ruin you with his seven vile gifts, entirely different to those of the spirit of light.

The first gift of the Holy Ghost is fear of the Lord,

which casts out all other fear, save that of offending God, and confirms the Christian in all that is good, leads him on to the practice of every virtue, and brings him at last to eternal life.

Now, what course does Satan pursue to confirm and strengthen the sinner in malice? He first seeks to persuade him that sin is only a pardonable weakness: so trifling indeed, that, unless temporal loss is connected therewith, it is not worth even a thought. He fills his heart with *human respect*, so that a *craven fear* makes him prefer displeasing God, to offending man. Woe to the unhappy beings to whom Satan bestows this disposition; for they are confirmed in malice and sin!

The second disposition of the soul which leads to salvation is fervor in prayer, union with God, a perpetual remembrance of His holy presence.

Satan strives to animate the soul with feelings the very reverse, until prayer becomes so distasteful to man, that at last he entirely neglects it, does not even think of God, but, like an irrational animal, goes through the world, caring only for the companionship of men as wicked, or, perhaps, more so than himself.

Woe to the wretch who lives in this *total neglect of prayer*; for he is confirmed by Satan in his service probably forever!

The third disposition of the heart, which assures us of perseverance in virtue, is knowledge; that heavenly knowledge, which teaches us that our eternal salvation, and the most fitting means to attain it, should

be kept constantly in view, as the most important and only really essential affair for the faithful child of the Church and for every man on earth.

But Satan seeks to ensnare him in the net of earthly desires and schemes, even as the spider keeps the fly moving its little feet and wings, until at length it can move them no more. Men thus become so entangled in worldly affairs, that they lose power to act for the good of their souls, and even grow spiritually blind so as to think they are acting a most wise and prudent part.

Woe to that sinner who is thus entangled by Satan, and held fast in the thralldom of *temporal cares*; for he will be dragged hither and thither at the will of this spirit of evil, and prevented from using the heavenly means by which he might escape from the toils.

The fourth gift of the Holy Ghost to confirm and strengthen us in good, is counsel. It so disposes the soul that the recipient can discern how he can best labor, not only for his own salvation, but also for the welfare of others; advising them how to advance in the science of the saints. But Satan is a rebellious spirit, whose delight it is to fish in *troubled waters*. If, thereby, he can deprive the sinner of the assistance of divine grace, thus rendering him confused and *helpless*, what more is needed to confirm him in sin? Think of Judas! When Satan took possession of him, he knew no more what to do; and even on that day when Jesus offered Himself for the salvation of mankind, he gave way to the blackest despair.

The fifth gift of the Holy Ghost is fortitude, which enables us to persevere in good to the end. Lucifer, on his part, leaves nothing untried to shake this celestial courage which inspires the Christian with the most heroic resolves; he seeks to turn him from the path of right, and leads him to abuse the graces bestowed upon him by a merciful God. When the sinner seeks forgiveness in the Sacrament of Penance, he tempts him to relapse, after which his confirmation in evil is easy. Alas! for the relapsing sinner who thinks he has no cause for fear, because he has confessed his sins, and received absolution for them! That is a fatal delusion, which will lead to final impenitence. Constant *relapses* weaken his will, and confirm him forever in the service of hell.

The sixth gift of the Holy Ghost, by which the children of the Church are confirmed in good, is that living faith by which man is not satisfied to confess his belief with the lips, and merely through habit, or to fulfill his religious duties because he has been so taught, but which makes him do it from an inward consciousness of the dignity of his vocation as a child of God, and of the admonitions of that divine grace which he never resists, and which invites him to lead the life of a zealous Christian, and obtain eternal bliss.

But Satan tries to weaken the influence of faith upon the life of man, or to destroy it entirely. He, too, often succeeds, so that many, who exteriorly lead lives in conformity with the requirements of the Church, give themselves no trouble as to how they stand before

God, and what they can answer on the day of terror and doom at the judgment-seat of Christ. There, they must account for graces neglected, by which, if they had availed themselves of them, they would have attained the most exquisite joy in heaven.

Alas! for the Catholic whom Satan can persuade that *faith alone is sufficient* for salvation; that because he is a Catholic, he will never be lost! He is confirmed by the spirit of darkness, and belongs to those of whom it has been written: "And the children of the house will be cast out."

The seventh disposition, by infusing which into the soul the Holy Ghost would ensure its eternal salvation, is a degree of divine love which impels us to love God above all, and to embrace all mankind in a truly fraternal affection. It is that heavenly wisdom which is a pledge of final perseverance in the service of God.

In direct opposition to this the ruler of the kingdom of darkness tries to instill into the heart of the sinner disgust and indifference to God, aversion and hate to his neighbor, or, perhaps, fills his whole being with a passion so vile, that he commits sins of the most shameful kind.

Alas! how many there are whom Satan thus confirms in his service, who, chained in the thralldom of lust, grow too weak to sever the bonds of some unchaste attachment. Yes, strange as it may seem when we consider the weapons with which God has provided us in the combat with Satan—the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost—that diabolical spirit too often steps in

with *his* seven vile gifts, and with one or another, so hardens man's heart, that there is, we might almost say, no means of bringing him back.

The enemies of Christ beheld Him call Lazarus forth from the grave, and yet at the question: "What shall we do, for this man worketh many miracles?" the answer came back: "Away with Him! away with Him! crucify Him! crucify Him!"

Thus it is, beloved in Christ, with sinners who, having received the seven gifts of the spirit of evil, have been confirmed in wickedness. They behold signs and wonders, and the Holy Ghost withholds not His divine inspirations; yet they harden their hearts, and remain impenitent unto the end.—Amen!

THIRD SERMON.

“And there appeared to them parted tongues, as it were of fire.”—Acts ii, 3.

CHRIST promised to send the Holy Ghost not only to the Apostles, but to all who would believe in Him, “to dwell with them forever.” And, indeed, when on the great festival of Whitsunday He fulfilled this promise, and the divine Spirit appeared in the form of parted tongues, as it were of fire, He rested not only on the heads of the Apostles, but on all who were there assembled, among whom were many of the female sex too.”

This should serve as an admonition that, although the Apostles were first and immediately chosen by Christ to announce the word of salvation over the whole earth, it is alike the duty and the privilege of every Catholic to contribute to the propagation of the kingdom of God on earth, and to lead souls to Christ by teaching them the truths of faith; if they are already members, but cold or tepid children of the Church, then it is the duty of every Christian to win them, by word and example, back to God.

It is true that Christ intrusted the apostleship of preaching only to those divinely appointed, who, through the Sacrament of Holy Orders, are ordained to be ministers of the altar; but there is also an apostleship of *encouragement*, of *example*, of *prayer*, and of *desire*, which all can frequently exercise.

None should fail in this duty, and how it can be fulfilled shall be the subject of my sermon to-day.

O Mary, Queen of Apostles, who didst so richly merit that title—not indeed through preaching, but through zeal for the salvation of souls—obtain for us some portion of that zeal which burned in the hearts of the early Christians who received the Holy Ghost on this glorious day!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, for the greater honor and glory of God.

In addition to the apostleship of preaching the word of God, my dear brethren, and the ministry of the priesthood in the sanctuary, there is still another—that of propagating the kingdom of Christ on earth, and to this we are all called by divine authority.

In regard to the apostleship immediately connected with the Sacrament of Holy Orders, it is most certain that no one can dare to preach the word of God to man except those divinely appointed and ordained priests of the Most High.

We learn from the Acts of the Apostles that they exercised the utmost care lest any one, not thus commissioned, should preach; for, in the first Council they held at Jerusalem, they wrote: “We have heard that there are some who trouble and disquiet you by their preaching, whom we have not sent. Do not hear them.” To us, also, this admonition of the Apostles is of great importance; for, since the introduction of

Protestantism, even the laity have taken it upon themselves to **preach**, and especially in America it is frequently done. Indeed, this abuse has reached such a point that even women pretend to expound the sacred text. This is usurping authority.

But there are ways and means entirely distinct from this by which the greatest good can be accomplished, and they are within the reach of all.

To these ways belongs, first, the apostleship of *instruction*, of warning, of reproof, of consolation. A very essential obligation rests upon parents to exercise the above in regard to their children. Full of solicitude, they must, from the very earliest years of their little ones, see that they are well and thoroughly instructed in matters of faith, both by word and example. They must never weary in their watchful care, but admonish, when occasion requires, those whom God has placed under their charge, and place such books within their reach as will be of permanent benefit to the mind and heart. Parents should esteem it not only a duty, but a pleasure to visit and encourage Catholic schools.

What is particularly needed for America at the present day is a fundamental and thorough home-training in all matters of *faith*; but the duty of parents has a still wider range. Here the apostleship of the *word* has proved more effective than when it is announced from the pulpit, and it consists in advising the children to faithfully fulfill their duties as good Christians, in whatever state of life they may be placed,

and to live so as to attain perfection in this life, and eternal happiness in heaven.

Should it nevertheless happen that children or subjects do not correspond with the care bestowed upon them—that they become careless or indifferent, or indulge in some forbidden amusement or evil intercourse with wicked companions, thus exposing their souls to ruin—these suggestions will show parents the necessity of administering words alike of reproof and encouragement. Yes, and even punishment can be very effectively employed in this apostleship.

All this refers to intercourse between relatives and friends too. There may be among them those who have not heard a sermon for years, who willfully, and of their own accord, shun every opportunity of doing so, of speaking with priests, or seeking in any way to promote the interest of their souls. In such instances the kindly offices of friends to supply the word of the priest, become still more essential.

On the last great day, when all hidden things shall be made manifest, it will be seen that, through the apostleship of the spoken and written Word, vast numbers of souls have been led to repentance and amendment of life, and finally have been saved.

To the apostleship of the word should be joined that of good *example*. “Words move, examples draw,” we are assured by a well-known proverb. If parents merely admonish their children to say their morning and evening prayers, but do not kneel down and unite with them, and, perhaps, even do not perform these

necessary devotions, the children will, in all probability, neglect their own. But let parents lead the daily prayers, read every evening some portions from the "Lives of the Saints;" and on Sundays select some other appropriate lesson, and question the children upon it, and the most beneficial results will appear. If parents never fail to assist at divine service on the days commanded, and receive monthly the Holy Sacraments of Penance and the Eucharist, they will set their children such a noble example that God will eventually bless them all. Let those tender souls given into your care by their Creator, see that you are zealous in the practice of humility, meekness, charity towards God's beloved poor, and liberality to the Infant Jesus and His Immaculate Mother by remembering the necessities of the Church; this beautiful example will be regarded by them as a precious legacy, and will be most effectual in serving to keep them in the path of virtue long after those who gave it lie moldering in the dust.

A glorious testimony to the truth of this appears in the "Lives of the Saints." Although centuries have rolled away since they passed from earth to heaven, they still encourage and assist mankind to labor for their sanctification and salvation. We particularly experience this in regard to SS. Benedict, Augustine, Dominic, Francis, Ignatius, and other founders of religious orders, and of those Saints who, by their preaching and missionary labors, propagated holy faith.

Christ says: "Let your light shine forth that men may see your works, and praise the Father in heaven

for them." We read in the life of St. Francis that he said to one of his brethren: "Let us go forth and preach." They went through many streets of the city, silently, till they again reached the monastery gates. There the brother spoke and said: "Father, did you not say, 'Let us go forth and *preach?*' and now behold us at the very spot wherſce we set out, without having uttered a single word." St. Francis replied: "Brother, we carried the sermon with us." "How so, Father?" "The busy world beheld us in our voluntary poverty, and knowing us from earlier times, they know that we, for the love of God, have left every thing. In that there is a most powerful admonition for them to detach their hearts from the world."

To this apostleship of example, then, is united that of *prayer* and of *desire*.

First.—That our encouragement and example may be effective, we must pray. *Prayer*, indeed, is the means appointed by God to obtain graces through which we can do all, but without which we are powerless.

Secondly.—Although your children may leave the home of their youth, and, bidding you farewell, go to a strange and distant land, there still remains one means of assisting them, and that is, prayer. Father—Mother—Sister—Brother—Friend! pray for the eternal welfare of those dear to you; pray for the salvation of the whole world. It was revealed by our Lord to St. Catherine of Sienna, that, as a recompense for her zealous prayer, He had granted the

grace of conversion to many thousands, and that her never-ceasing petitions had obtained their perseverance until the end.

In conclusion, beloved in Christ, there remains still another apostleship in which all can participate,—that of *desire*. If the desire be sincere, it possesses as much value before God as the act itself. It was the ardent wish of St. Francis Xavier to effect the conversion of China and Asia, to destroy the Greek schism, and to reconcile Protestant Germany with the Church; and then, returning to Rome, to embrace Ignatius, his spiritual father, and to receive his blessing. With these wishes burning in his heart, the saint yielded up his pure spirit into the embrace of Christ, and hastened to his eternal reward. God knows these desires, and accepts them for the glorious fulfillment.

These are the ways and means by which you can, each and every one, become Apostles of Christ on earth, that you may have a never-ending claim to that glory of which we read in the Prophet Daniel (xii, 5) which is awarded to those who instruct others to justice: “They will one day shine as stars in an endless eternity.”—Amen!

FEAST OF WHIT-MONDAY.

FIRST SERMON.

“For God so loved the world as to give His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him may not perish, but may have life everlasting.”—St. John iii, 16.

THE holy season of Whitsun-tide recalls to the mind the establishment of the Church, and the manner and form in which God provided that, through the infinite merits of Jesus Christ, means should be bestowed on all men for their redemption and sanctification.

“For God so loved the world as to give His only-begotten Son for it.” These are the words of the holy Evangelist, St. John. After the consummation of the work of Redemption, it is true that Jesus left this world, when He ascended into heaven to enter His eternal glory; but He established on earth that kingdom of God, His Church, to which He committed the word of revelation, as He had announced it when on earth, and, at the same time, also, the sources of salvation, through which graces should be bestowed upon all men, to enable them to live in accordance with the precepts, obligations, and principles of holy faith.

Since, then, this His One only true and divine Church, has exclusively possessed and preserved these treasures of faith, Christ has placed her, as it were, on a lofty

mount, whence she can be clearly discerned by all who are of good will; and has endowed her with qualities called marks, which belong and are peculiar to her alone.

Let us, my brethren, glance to-day at these four marks, that amid the darkness of understanding and obscurity of spirit which are, alas! prevalent, we may behold the one true Church—the Bride of Christ, our Mother—shine forth brilliant and beautiful, and with a luster which can not be dimmed.

O Mary, protectress of the Holy Church established by Christ, obtain for us, we beseech thee, that faith which will enable us not only courageously to confess our religion, but to live according to its dictates!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, for the greater glory of God!

Were I to request almost any Catholic child to enumerate the four marks of the Church, I should meet with a ready answer; and yet I find it of the utmost importance to make them the subject of a special discourse.

First.—Because it frequently happens that what is learned in early life is forgotten or neglected amid the cares of later years.

Secondly.—If there is an earnest desire to attain a more perfect knowledge of the arguments upon which some truths are based, the understanding being more developed as our years advance, we can understand and appreciate them better than we could in youth.

Thirdly.—We live in a time when it becomes particularly necessary to arouse the Catholic spirit, and enliven the faith which may have grown languid or cold. This is especially the case in America, and also in Germany, where there is such constant intercourse between those of a different faith, where Catholics and Protestants so often mingle together.

How often we hear the expression: "We are all Christians, and believe in the same God; so the difference between Catholics and Protestants is but trifling—the former choose one path to church, the latter another."

Thus, indifference in matters of faith creeps in; and those whose religious instruction has been defective, or, if thorough, has been forgotten in the rush of temporal cares, are in the most imminent danger of losing their faith.

But far different is the aspect when, fully awake to the glory and beauty of his grand old faith, the Catholic Christian is able to prove that, between it and the various Protestant sects, not a grain of resemblance exists. They are as different as day and night, falsehood and truth, life and death. And why? Because God is essentially truth; and all churches or *sects* which deviate from truth even on one single point, differing from what has been revealed by God in the slightest degree, can never be the Church of which He declared: "He that will not hear the Church, let him be to thee as the heathen and publican;" and, "He that believeth not will be condemned."

Those who unfortunately have been born in a heretical belief, and who console themselves by the thought that, as they believe in Christ, and lead lives which can not be censured, they are sure of salvation, can not be too often reminded that to *believe* in Christ is not sufficient; that whosoever cares for the salvation of his soul must practise what Christ has enjoined as the Church expounds it.

To make use of a simple and plain example, when there is question of the preservation of life, it is foolish to say that, because the hands or feet are sound, there is no danger of death. One wound in the heart, and life is extinct. It is the same with willful errors in faith; for St. James says: "Whoever offends in one point is guilty of all;" because, for *each* article of faith we have the same infallible authority of God as for all. One willful error in matters of faith may be compared to that deadly aim which, so to speak, sends the bullet *through the heart of the soul*, destroying therein the life of grace, and rendering it hideous in the sight of the Lord.

How important it is, therefore, to know the true Church of Christ, and to believe all that she presents for our belief.

After these preliminary observations, let us now glance, in order, at each separate mark of the Church, to prove that the numerous sects by which we are surrounded, especially the Protestant, can lay no claim to one among them.

The first mark of the Catholic Church is *Unity*. She

is *one*: "Father, I pray Thee, let them be one." "One faith, one Lord, one baptism, one body, and one mind." These are the words of St. Paul to the faithful. *One*, is the Catholic Church, our Mother. She is one in her Founder, Jesus Christ; one in the doctrine she teaches, and one in her children banded together by one and the same faith. She is one in her means of salvation; one in her Head, who is the direct successor of the prince of the Apostles, the glorious St. Peter.

Far different is it with the Sects. They have not been established by Christ; they can only trace their origin to the vagaries of men, and possess not the characteristics of unity, for each of their members can take the Bible and find in its pages authority to believe as he will. They have no spiritual ruler. Take England, for example, where the Sovereign is the head of the Church. Even if a Queen is on the throne, she still claims the privilege of swaying the destinies of the nation in regard to religion.

Christ our Lord wished for a *Holy* Church, therefore He prayed: "*Sanctify* them in truth;" and called out to His faithful children: "Be ye perfect, as your Father in heaven is perfect." St. Peter exclaims: "Christ offered Himself for His Church, that He might sanctify her;" and has not the Offering brought forth the richest fruit?

Holy is our Mother, the Catholic Church. Her Founder is Christ, the Holiest of the Holy. She is holy in her doctrine; holy in the means she so lavishly provides to gain salvation for the souls of her

children; holy in her members, for she can boast of the nine angelic choirs as among them, and claim vast numbers of canonized saints in her ranks. She can joyfully point to the ever-blessed and Immaculate Virgin and Mother, claiming all as belonging to the communion of saints in Heaven and on earth.

It is not so with the Sects; for the pages of history unmistakably prove that their founders, in many instances, were dissolute men, addicted to passions the most vile, breaking their vows, and living unblushingly in open adultery. Witness Luther and Henry VIII., who stand before the world as the basest of men, their memories branded with the stigma of crime, the religions they founded born of pride and lust.

The various sects teach error as if it were truth; and possess not the means of sanctification, which Christ deposited in His Church. Search the history of their rise and progress, and you will find no record of a patron saint. Nay more, when, either with or without some pretense of a ceremony of baptism, they would christen a child, the name selected *must* come from the long list of Catholic Saints, unless indeed they search the Old Testament for the name of a Jew, or prefer the surname of some political hero.

Christ our Lord wished His Church to be *universal*, and to become the Church of all nations, as appears from the command to His Apostles to "go forth and preach the Gospel to all nations, teaching them to observe whatsoever He had commanded them, and promising that He would remain with them forever."

Yes, truly the Catholic Church, our Mother, is *universal*; for, from the days of the Apostles she *dates* her establishment; and, in the *Creed*, they have given her the title of "Catholic," which means *universal*. She is the Mother Church, who of heathens made such fervent Christians that they preferred to give up life itself rather than yield an atom of their allegiance to her. She alone possesses in herself the *principle of universality*, because she alone is governed by one head, whose authority is recognized by all; for all know that he is divinely commissioned to rule, and that he is an *unerring guide* in matters of faith.

Without this infallible power to teach and decide, without this unquestionable right to rule, received from Christ Himself by the sovereign Pontiff, it would be impossible to secure such an absolute unity in matters of faith as now exists among so many millions of souls.

In this regard, Protestantism presents the greatest contrast; for, the various sects exist not from the beginning, but date back only to the brief period of three hundred years; and what Tertullian asserted seventeen centuries ago of the heretics of his day: "They can make perverts, but not converts," is equally applicable to the sects of to-day. And even if they succeed in increasing their ranks by means of some misguided beings, who, for pecuniary or other temporal considerations have proved false to their faith, they *never* can constitute a Church, because each of its members would claim the right to believe for himself. They are not faithful to Christ, but to *self*.

Let me illustrate this by a homely comparison, and say: Suppose that one hundred thousand heads of cabbage were placed one above another, by no possible conception of fancy could they be transformed into one head; and in the same way it would be impossible, where there is no unity in matters of faith, and no uniformity in the guidance of the Church, whose fallibility is admitted without a doubt, to maintain that that Church is one.

Finally, Christ our Lord wished His Church to be *apostolical*, hence His words to St. Peter: "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church." To guide her children through the desert of life, and lead them happily to the promised land, she can point to the successors of the Apostles, her bishops and priests, and, above all, to him who presides over her destiny on earth, the Pope. Hence the emphatic declaration of St. Ambrose: "Where Peter is, there is the Church."

Where, my dear brethren, can this mark be found in any of the sects? We can most emphatically reply: *In none*. This should be to all, as clear as the noon-day sun, a proof that not one of them is, or can ever hope to be, the one true Church, which has existed for over eighteen hundred years without spot or blemish—pure, holy, immaculate—as when our Lord Jesus Christ first chose her to be His spouse. Not one of those sects, which have all originated, if not in passion or crime, at least in the wild fancy of some fevered brain, even pretends to reach back to the days

of Peter and the Apostles; therefore, "Peter is not with them."

Then, beloved in Christ, let us send forth most fervent prayers of praise and thanksgiving to God, Who has so mercifully called us to be children of this Holy Church; and, when we have occasion to speak of religion with our separated friends, let us draw their attention to her four marks—Unity, Sanctity, Catholicity, and Apostolicity. Then, if they, with sincere desire to discover the truth, go earnestly to work, the Holy Ghost will enlighten them until, recognizing the Catholic Church as the only true one, they will enter her fold: and, living as her faithful members, will, at the hour of death, be called to enjoy the reward of their courage and fidelity by her divine and holy Founder, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.—Amen!

SECOND SERMON.

“And there appeared to them parted tongues as it were of fire.”—Acts ii, 3.

IT is most fitting, beloved in Christ, that the great work of the Redemption, the greatest visible work of God, should be divided among the three divine persons of the Blessed Trinity, each one bearing a part in some special manner, yet in such a way that the honor and glory which beam therefrom should revert wholly to the One only triune God, of one essence and nature, eternal—existing from all eternity.

God the Father sent His only-begotten Son into this world; God the Son assumed our human nature, and completed the work of redemption; while to God the Holy Ghost was left the glory of imparting to man the merits thereof, inspiring him with the desire to propagate, and endowing him with ability to govern the new-born Church.

It was God the Son, the WORD, Who became man for us. The Word is, therefore, the means appointed by the most blessed Trinity to diffuse the holy faith over the universe; and upon the feast of Pentecost, as the day which witnessed the establishment of the Church, the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of truth, descended in the form of tongues of fire.

Thus, in the divine economy, it was arranged that the diffusion of faith should be world wide; not, so to speak, through the intervention of divine Providence, but by the co-operation of man among men, that, in

one point of view success might be effected, in spite of all opposition, by frail and helpless man, that the divinity of the Church might be more apparent, and that those who earnestly strive to propagate the faith might increase their merits a hundred-fold.

The communications of the Holy Ghost should, therefore, be accomplished through the word of man to his fellow-man, a proof of which may be found in the words of St. Paul: "But how can one believe if no one preach? and how will one preach *if* no one is sent?" The tongues were at once cloven and fiery; and herein is to be found an admonition of the deepest importance.

Let us, therefore, to-day consider the signification of "the cloven tongues as it were of fire," under which symbol God the Holy Ghost entered the hearts of the Apostles and disciples on the feast of Pentecost.

O Mary, Mother of fair love, obtain for us a readiness to receive the Holy Ghost with all His divine inspirations!

I speak in the holy name of Jesus, for the greater honor and glory of God!

"Going therefore, teach ye all nations, and behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world." Thus runs the commission of Christ to His Apostles; and that it might be done in a fitting manner, they were not to go forth on their mission at

once, but were to wait for the descent of the Holy Ghost, who, indeed, appeared "and sat upon every one of them."

And could the Holy Ghost have chosen a more appropriate symbol of Himself to indicate His mission through the Father and the Son? It is the tongue which gives utterance to the word, and takes it to the farthest limits of the earth. Thus it was the zeal of St. Raymond Nonnatus that carried the tidings of salvation to the Turks, undaunted by the threats of those unbelievers, who would fain have sealed his lips. The barbarous punishment which they chose to inflict upon him, was to thrust a sharp instrument through those holy lips, and suspend a lock from them.

The fiery tongues which flamed above the heads of the Apostles, therefore, symbolized the preaching of the word as enunciated by those tongues through which God was to send over the world light, strength, and consolation for the salvation of the fallen human race. And the word of God, as spoken by Apostolic lips, has met with most glorious success, and brought forth fruit a thousand fold. When those tongues appeared at Jerusalem, the entire world, in matters of faith, was shrouded in the most intense and impenetrable darkness. Over the holy land, indeed, hovered the twilight of revelation, but the pagan world remained groping in an utterly rayless night of gloom. But, lo! scarce had the Holy Spirit, represented by fiery tongues, rested above the heads of the Apostles,

when St. Peter opened his lips with an inspired eloquence, which none could resist, and expounded the truths of the new-born Church. Thousands responded to the call of grace, and believed; and behold, before the lapse of a few short years, the faith had spread over the whole universe to its uttermost limits. Its brilliant light flashed across the darkened world, and the path to salvation became clear. O happy Christians, who listened to those inspired men! The understanding of man was illumined so that he knew whence he came and why he had been created by God. Not only was the origin of evil made clear to him, but also the knowledge of how to combat it. He realized the value of the means of salvation, and felt strengthened to live and to die in the service of God.

Yet the word is not intended only to *teach*, but also to *console*; and since the spirit of man has been illumined by faith, he should learn the value of sufferings. By accepting them with joy, for the love of Christ, they can be changed into an endless source of merit, and the thorns which twine around His cross transformed to most lovely and fragrant flowers. Since Christ has redeemed the world by sufferings, the most intense that can be imagined, they should be the greatest consolation for the Christian who, filled with the consciousness of faith, may well exclaim, with St. Paul: "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of Christ."

The tongues which rested upon the heads of the

avored missionaries were at the same time divided, or cloven. Tongues of encouragement it is true, but also of *warning* and *threatening* for all who loudly profess the faith, but who, when the question turns upon living in accordance with its divine commands, are careless and cold.

In proof of this we need only read the epistles, written at different times, by the Apostles, to the faithful, wherein they not only instruct, but encourage, warn, reprehend, and, when necessary, inflict the penalty which they deemed proper. The long and unbroken line of the successors of the same Apostles, in their holy office, have invariably adopted a similar course. And who, indeed, could tell us, beloved brethren, how many *words* have, in the hours, and days, and months, and years, that go to make up the long course of nineteen centuries, been uttered by those Apostolic tongues? They have announced the Gospel to the heathen; to the Christian they have imparted encouragement, amid the struggles of life; to all faithful children of the Church they have made known the holy will of God, pointed out the path to Paradise, and the way of eternal bliss.

Every word uttered by preachers, missionaries, and confessors, with a view to effecting some spiritual good, is typified by the fiery cloven tongues; but, above all, we have cause to congratulate ourselves upon the admirable work, in this regard, of the successors of the prince of Apostles, St. Peter. By their allocutions, bulls, documents, and decisions, they

have pointed out to all nations, with unerring decision, the way of truth and salvation.

In some cases the tongue has even been glorified by miracles; witness that of St. Anthony and St. John Nepomucene. The tongues of these great servants of God were preserved from corruption, for their glory, through and in the glory of the Most High.

The tongue has been chosen by God as the means of propagating His kingdom on earth. Those which rested upon the heads of the Apostles were cloven, and at the same time, as Holy Writ tells us, "of fire," being emblematic of the love for God which burned in their fervent hearts. Had not this love so ardently glowed in the breasts of the Apostles and their successors, they would never have taken upon themselves the labors, hardships, sacrifices, and sufferings which their vocation required of them; and, in regard to the convincing power which the divine word assumed upon their lips, it was that divine fire which caused and impelled so many who heard them to embrace the true faith.

The unction of holy love imparts the plenitude and fervor of consolation to the divine word. Thus, when the preacher—from the days of old until the present time—may have been obliged to raise his voice against sinners, and threaten them with the thunders of the wrath of God, the warning, tempered as it is by love, causes not the hearers to despair, but inspires them with the hope of forgiveness.

This ardent love filled the Apostles with the spirit of endurance and patience, so that they were strengthened to go on until their glorious undertaking had reached a happy completion.

Had this love been wanting, the words of St. Paul would have been verified: "If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal." If this be true of the word which is preached and spoken, it is no less true of that which is written and printed, for it is the same which is promulgated among the children of men. Let us, therefore, make use of both ways to communicate to our fellow creatures the truths of faith, particularly in our own day, when the divine wisdom has been pleased to place in our hands the means by which the influence of the word is so immeasurably increased. I refer to the Apostleship of the *Press*. We do not, like the Apostles, possess the gift of tongues, but by means of the press this grace is fully supplied; and it would be difficult to say whether the word *of* salvation has been more widely spread by that wonderful gift which enabled thousands of different nationalities to understand what St. Peter preached, or by the press, which empowers us, by diversifying the spoken and translating the written word, to preach to all nations at once. It enables the missionary to preach in regions where he has never been, and *still* to preach when the tongue which uttered the words, or the hand which transcribed them, lies powerless and

still, and when the soul from whence they came has gone to its eternal home.

Therefore, if the royal psalmist exclaims: "I have believed, therefore I have spoken," we dare and can say, with still more consolation, "I have believed, therefore I have preached and written."

In this manner, my dear brethren, will the promise made to us by the Lord, through His prophet Daniel, be fulfilled in us in the most perfect measure: "They who instruct others to justice shall shine as stars through all eternity."—Amen.

THIRD SERMON.

“And they began to speak.”—Aets ii, 4.

OF the word of God as preached by the Apostles, by which the Church was propagated on earth after the Ascension of Christ, St. Paul testifies that it extended to the farthest limits. Beyond a doubt, the Apostles literally fulfilled the divine commission: “Going, therefore, teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.”

Had mankind universally accepted the preaching of the Apostles, their mission, united with the power of miracles, which accompanied the apostolic word, would have been sufficient to illuminate, during every age of the world's existence, the whole human race in things of salvation, and to lead all men to the way of truth, until they would safely rest in the embrace of their Mother the Holy Church. But, alas! although thousands were converted by those sermons, the Apostles still met with opposition and resistance in the very beginning; for the evening shadows of the feast, which had been so gloriously ushered in, found St. Peter and St. John already in prison, and the prohibition of the authorities was made known to them: no longer were they to preach in the name of Jesus, Whose commands they must cease to obey.

But the prince of the Apostles, and his zealous band

of colaborers, enriched with the sevenfold gifts of the Holy Ghost, were restrained neither by threats nor chastisements from doing their duty. Hell, robbed of so many souls long regarded by Satan as his prey, was quick to place every impediment in their way; but they surmounted them all.

And what, beloved in Christ, was and is still the most pernicious and successful means employed by diabolical art to render fruitless the work of the Word and promote the destruction of the kingdom of good by the powers of darkness? I say it is the abuse of the tongue.

O Mary, who, by crushing the serpent's head, didst vanquish hell, obtain for us grace to conquer the enemies of the Church with the victorious power of the divine Word.

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, for the honor and glory of God.

What a fearful weapon the tongue can be in the power of wicked men! Lucifer makes use of it to attack the kingdom of God on earth, as he employed it to work the ruin of our first parents in the garden of Eden, and therewith the woe of their hapless posterity. It was the enticing promises, made by the wily tongue of the serpent to Eve, which caused her to fall. It is by the word of seduction that he would fain, if that could be possible, render fruitless the work of the Redemption of man.

Christ, the Word of God made man, entered into

this world; but as soon as Mary presented Him in the temple, Simeon, inspired by God, lifted up his voice and declared that the divine Child should be placed as a sign for the ruin and salvation of many. Even as, on the one hand, it is by the *Word*, as enunciated by the ministers of God by which the tidings of revelation are to reach the human race, that men may become illuminated by faith, become children of the Church, and serve its divine Founder, until rewarded by eternal happiness:—so, on the other, there is a *word* which is employed in the service of Lucifer as a means not only to destroy or prevent as much as possible the effects of the divine Word, but to spread or promote the kingdom of evil.

The Gospel, the Epistles, and the Acts of the Apostles themselves give testimony of this, together with the entire history of the Church until to-day. The symbol of the sanctified tongues of fire is not only the symbol of the Holy Spirit, but also of His evil adversary.

As those burning tongues were emblematic of the ardor of divine love, so is the fire, which glows in lurid light upon the tongues of the damned, a sign of hatred to God and His kingdom. These diabolical tongues vent their wickedness in various ways.

First, there is the *lying* tongue, the tongue of calumny, which can be found in every part of the world.

Even as Christ promised and sent the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of truth, that the Apostles and disciples might imbibe all truth, so the tongue which, under the influence of the devil, wages perpetual war against

the kingdom of truth, is the tongue which propagates *lies*. Holy Scripture calls the devil a liar from the beginning—"the father of lies."

Man, made according to the image of God, longs for truth. God is truth. This desire is so great that man often mistakes falsehood for truth, but only so far as it has the appearance of that quality; and hence the efforts of the emissaries of hell to deform and distort the sense of the divine Word, as they did even in the days of Christ, for we read: "They went forth to ensnare Him in His speech." They distorted the meaning of His doctrine, to calumniate Him; and although Christ solemnly declared that He came not to destroy but to fulfill the law, they asserted before the people that He was an enemy of Moses and of the Law.

And although He enjoined them "to render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's," they asserted that He promulgated sedition against him.

The fire which glowed on their tongues was the flame of hatred toward Christ and His kingdom. For, although the Saviour demonstrated to them His advent from the writings of the Prophets themselves, performed miracles, even raised the dead to life, yet they stretched forth their tongues against Him to cry out: "Crucify Him! crucify Him!"

Three millions of tongues were then stretched forth against Christ, inflamed with the hatred and envy of hell! And who would be able to compute the millions and millions which, in the course of nineteen hundred years, have wagged their heads against Him,

not in Jerusalem alone, but over the whole world? The Jews, dispersed over the earth, manifested constant opposition to the Gospel, as we learn from the Acts of the Apostles, on almost every page. The Jews of Rome, indeed, did not pretend to deny the fact; but said, to the very face of St. Paul: "We know, in regard to that sect called Christian, that it is every-where contradicted." This opposition of the Jews was very soon followed by that of the heathens; and in what point was Satan most solicitous among them? I answer: In distorting and giving a false meaning to the doctrines of Christianity, that he might render the Gospel hateful to men.

How often, too, nowadays, in China and Japan, does not the distortion of the doctrine of the Real Presence,—that Christ is truly present in the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar,—serve as a means to calumniate the Church when its members are accused of eating human flesh, and slaughtering innocent children for the purpose? And if we think, further, of the venom of heretical tongues, are not almost all the articles of faith which Protestants generally attack distorted by them, and the tales they promulgate of us mere inventions? And this, notwithstanding the fact that hundreds and hundreds of learned men, during three centuries, have told them over and again the real truth.

And yet the tongues of those blatant ministers of the Protestant sects remain arrayed against Christ and His Church! They continue to utter their vile calum-

nies. Yet, if infidels and heretics would, with impartiality, tell what they know of our faith, few indeed would obey the voice of the tempter which poisons their minds. What fills men with disgust toward the Church and her ministers are those lying tongues, which disfigure the reality, the aim, and the end.

If this be true of the spoken word, it is no less so of the far more pernicious influence of the press, which changes the word into just so many tongues as there are words in the volumes, to furnish the poison of lies to the world.

O God, how many myriads of flaming tongues do we not find therein stretched forth against Thee and Thy Holy Church impregnated with the blackest of hate! And if this be true of the Church in general, it is no less so with regard to the kingdom of God in the hearts of her children. How many tongues move daily to weaken the religious convictions of youth, and *to ruin their principles of morality!* They not only ridicule those who lead good and pious lives, but they try to loosen the bonds of fraternal union which should unite men together.

To these belong the tongues of *slanderers*, *de-tractors*, and *tale-bearers*; also those who give utterance to that *vain boasting* which grows more and more common, and those who wag in rude contradiction, in quarrels, and in disrespect to the Divine Name.

Further, the tongues of those whose *seductive* words lead others to commit mortal sin, especially the vice of impurity. What, indeed, is more common than the prac-

tice of sinful conversation, which can not be too severely censured, of which the seducer makes use to corrupt his victim?

In addition to the above, a great many sins are committed by an inordinate love of *talk*, and by unnecessary *visits* and *amusements*. It is the tongue which, in all these instances, does Satan most service when he sets forth to destroy the kingdom of good in the hearts of mankind, and in its place to establish the rule of infidelity or indifference in matters of faith. Who can not see, at first glance, that it is the tongue of which Satan makes most use to spread the kingdom of evil—to disturb the dominion of God? Is it not astonishing to reflect with what success hell always makes use of the *word* in its diabolical efforts? By spreading false maxims of life, Satan poisons the judgment of public opinion, and knows how to give wrong the appearance of right. Those who would work the moral ruin of man are made to appear as the friends of humanity, while the world calls ignorance in matters of faith and neglect of the duties of religion, enlightenment and culture. It tries, by every means, to gain youth by giving them false views of life, and filling them with hatred against the Church and her priests.

And then, have not the emissaries of hell the daily *press* under their control? Pamphlets are constantly being scattered among men to prove that science has taken the place of religion, and that bitter is the conflict now raging between them.

And if, beloved in Christ, this is done with an outlay

of so much money and zeal on the part of the antagonists of the Church through vanity and malice, should not the children of the Church emulate these evil exertions in an opposite direction, and do all in their power to disseminate good books over the world? We should also take care that we, ourselves, are thoroughly instructed in matters of faith, and then take every opportunity to aid in enlightening others.

We should support the Catholic press, and distribute books and pamphlets to counteract, as much as possible, the effects of those sent forth by the apostles of hell.

Let us act in this manner, and the kingdom of God will increase in the world, and, with it, our merits, through the constant imitation of the apostolic Christians —Amen!

FEAST OF THE MOST HOLY TRINITY.

FIRST SERMON.

"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations; baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."—Matt. xxviii, 19.

THE beautiful chain of festivals commemorating the mysteries of the redemption, linked together by so many golden memories of fervor and piety, is finished; but ere it is laid aside—not, indeed, as some thing to be no longer cared for, but as a precious assurance of faith and hope and love—the Church adds one more brilliant ornament to it, which is the Feast of the Most Holy Trinity. This gives us to understand that although every feast, properly speaking, is celebrated only for the greater glorification, honor, and adoration of the triune God, it is nevertheless most salutary for the children of the Church to be, by an especial solemnity, reminded of the dogma of this incomprehensible mystery.

The celebration of this festival can not fail to inspire us with more ardent sentiments of love and gratitude, and a determination to pay undivided homage to each of the three Divine Persons, since each one bore a part in the redemption of man.

God the Father sent His only-begotten Son into the world to save us; God the Son assumed human nature and redeemed us, and God the Holy Ghost bestowed upon us the precious fruits of redemption.

In reality we shall celebrate this feast only in heaven—forever! The commemoration to-day, however, or as we may say, the vigil of the perpetual feast, will exert a most beneficial influence upon our lives.

The veneration of the Most Blessed Trinity, in the spirit of the ecclesiastical celebration of to-day, indicates how we should begin, in some degree, to lead the life of the blessed in heaven, ere yet we are called to leave this vale of tears.

And this I will place before you for consideration to-day.

O Mary, daughter of the eternal Father, Mother of the Incarnate Son, and spouse of the Spirit of Truth, help us to live so that the guardian angel of every Christian present here will be permitted to direct to Him the blessed words: "The Lord is with thee!"

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, for the greater honor of God!

"Our conversation is in heaven," says the Apostle of the Gentiles to us, from which arises the question: "But in what consists the essential life of the saints in heaven?" I answer: They are with God; they behold Him face to face; adore, thank Him, and are united with God; the essential, infinite love and beat-

itude, in a manner that they seem rather to be more divine than created beings.

This is the state of the blessed, as we learn from the Roman Catechism; and this in itself declares in what our conversation must consist, that we, according to the challenge of the Apostle, may, while still on earth, live as if already in the realms of bliss.

We must enter, as it were, into the very spirit of prayer, so that, after having communed with our God, we may still remain always in His holy presence, and view the world and its creatures; not merely with our corporeal eyes, but in the light of faith; offering not only at the hour of prayer our acts of adoration, thanksgiving, and love to God, but encouraging such dispositions at every moment of our lives. *This* is the state of prayer to which Christ refers when he enjoins us to "pray always;" that is, to pray so that we may exclaim with the beloved in the Cantic of Canticles: "I sleep, but my heart watcheth." "I remain united with my God." That these may be, indeed, the affections of our hearts, it is of the utmost importance that we henceforth think particularly, and often, of this great mystery, and cherish a special devotion to it.

We read of a holy hermit who ascended daily an elevated piece of ground, from the summit of which he enjoyed a most exquisite view of the surrounding landscape. A fertile plain lay at the base of the mount, watered by a limpid stream, the windings of which, as it occasionally peeped forth from the thick foliage which shaded its banks, gave it the appearance of a

broad and shining band of silver. Far beyond was seen "the deep blue sea," which seemed to blend with the heavens it reflected in its depths.

Sometimes the hermit would postpone his visit until the eventide, when the azure sky would be brilliant and sparkling with stars—those radiant worlds of light on which it is joy to gaze—or the fair queen of night would remain suspended in space above the ocean, as if entranced by the image she beheld therein. The hermit would gaze around upon this wondrous beauty, and prostrate himself in profound adoration, while, for hours together, his prayer consisted of nothing but the constant repetition of those words of praise: "Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost." And then he would extend his arms to heaven, as if longing to soar to that loveliness of which this fair earth is but a faint type.

We may, perhaps, ask ourselves what sentiments filled this hermit's heart when he thus prayed. Yet, my dearest Christians, the question would be needless; for our own hearts should tell us this. If, with a lively faith we think upon the relation which the Three Divine Persons bear to each other and to us, and how in all the beauties of the earth and sea and sky we should behold the might and majesty of the adorable Trinity,—the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,—certainly affections of *adoration*, *thanksgiving*, and *love* should animate our prayers, and bear them on high to the throne of God. They should replenish our souls with love, and exercise such an influence upon our every

act, that although still on earth we shall live as do the saints in heaven.

It is by frequent meditation upon the Three Divine Persons, and their infinite perfections, that this three-fold disposition will spring up within us to strengthen us, and render our lives faithful for the home beyond the skies.

The thought of the *eternal Father* as the first principle of the other two Divine Persons reminds us solemnly of the perfection of the divine nature; and, indeed, who could reflect upon the glorious attributes of the triune God in His eternal existence, and in the external relations of His perfections, without feelings of the most profound admiration, praise, and *adoration*?

God, considered in Himself, has existed of Himself from all eternity, as the infinitely perfect Being. In Him are Three Divine Persons, and yet, incomprehensible mystery! He is but one. How can man think of this wonderful truth without sinking down before the throne of God, to adore Him with all the celestial hosts?

This perfection also beams forth in the most diverse relations exteriorly, as the infinite power, wisdom, sanctity, justice, long-suffering, truth, majesty, fidelity, love, beauty, and beatitude. Every contemplative soul who becomes absorbed in the immensity of these perfections, as holy faith teaches us to believe them, will fall at once into an abyss of heart-felt admiration, and sigh forth: "Lord, triune God—I adore Thee; I serve but Thee!"

The Christian who meditates upon the *incarnate Son*, views with the eyes of faith, more especially the wonders of the infinite goodness and mercy of God, which are particularly glorified in the rescue of the fallen human race, so strikingly indeed that each individual soul has the right to appropriate whatever was done for mankind.

These considerations will recall many gifts and graces conferred upon us by the triune God, which should merit our *gratitude*, and cause us to say with holy David: "What shall I render to the Lord for all He hath done for me?" and also for His glorious promises for all eternity. I am a human soul created by Thee, O Lord, and for Thee. I am Thy own image. Oh, what a favor! Once I was nothing, and Thou gavest unto me a most glorious existence; more glorious than the firmament all brilliantly spangled with stars; more glorious than the whole exterior world in all its grandeur and magnificence; more glorious than the heavens themselves which so majestically arch above the skies. How I thank Thee, O God!

I behold in the heavens, indeed, myriads of Angels to whom Thou hast also given a most glorious destiny. Through the fall of Adam, Thy image was destroyed in my soul, and I was excluded from heaven; but Thou didst become man for me, and my nature became exalted above the Angels. I am permitted to call Thee my Brother,—I am a child of the Church with the most abundant means of grace at my command, and with every breath I draw can increase my

merits for heaven. Oh, what indeed can I render to the Lord for all He has done for me? What else but a grateful heart? Holy David says: "In my meditation a fire enkindled itself;" and again: "When Thou hast enlarged my heart did I run in the way of Thy precepts."

Now, if the only thought of the glory of the nature of God and the graces received from Him fills the heart with affections of love towards Him it is in a special manner the work of the *Holy Ghost* to bestow on every soul that remains intimately united with God in prayer, the foretaste of those delights which will one day constitute our eternal bliss. The lives of the saints exemplify this, and prove how great were the spiritual joys which they tasted on earth by constant intercourse with God.

Although every soul is not called to be filled with such gifts of the love of the Holy Ghost, yet their effects will not fail for any one who, opening his heart to the inspirations of that divine Spirit, will strive to walk in the way of perfection.

By contemplating the mystery of the Most Holy Trinity, he can acquire that disposition to which the promise of Christ refers: "The Father and I will come to him to take up our abode with him, in order to unite him with us once forever through the divine Spirit in the bond of beatifying love."

May every soul thus become intimately united with God—the triune Deity—forever.—Amen!

SECOND SERMON.

“For there are three that give testimony: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are One.”—1 St. John v, 7.

THE Church commemorates to-day, as every well-instructed Christian is fully aware, that mystery of faith which inculcates the belief in the most blessed Trinity, or three Divine Persons in one God. This article of faith teaches us that there is but one God and one divine nature, the essential self-existent, eternal, and infinite perfection, the Creator of all things.

However, in this one divine nature and essence, we discern three different substantial relations, which we call persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Of these, the Father is the principal. From the Father the Son proceeds, through knowledge; the Holy Ghost proceeds from the Father and the Son at the same time, as the Spirit of love, which flows from the knowledge of the Father in the Son, and that of the Son in the Father, from all eternity, and beatifies in an infinite degree, the plenitude of the Divinity.

It is our duty, as rational creatures, to fulfill the will of God in the most perfect manner, and to find our highest aim, our greatest delight and happiness, in the contemplation of his adorable perfections. And that we may lead such a life in the service of God, we must assiduously practise the three divine virtues: faith, hope, and charity, to which St. Paul refers when

he says: "Now there remain faith, hope, and charity;" of which we may say: "And these three are one."

Let us consider to-day in what relation these three divine virtues stand to the three divine persons of the Trinity, and how they, with united strength, exert a sanctifying influence upon our lives.

O Mary, Mother of knowledge, of holy hope, and of fair love, who didst possess a most perfect faith, hope, and love, pray for us, that we may become strengthened in these three divine virtues; at every breath we draw, and through our lives, give God honor and glory.

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus for the greater glory of God.

"Whosoever approaches God, must believe," as the Apostle assures us. And in another place he says: "Now there remain three: faith, hope, and charity." And again: "Without faith it is impossible to please God."

It is, indeed, the light of faith which has revealed to us the existence of the world, the creation of man, his final destination, his fall, and redemption.

Faith points to that Church which God established upon earth for the salvation of man. He Himself transmitted to us the word of faith and the most abundant means of salvation; and it is by faith that we learn what awaits us after death.

It is faith which places before our eyes, on the one hand, the deformity of sin, and, on the other, the entire beauty of virtue.

Faith teaches, at the same time, our relations to each other as children of whom Adam and Eve were the common parents; as children of the same family of God—that is, the Holy Church on earth. Faith teaches, moreover, with what zeal we should endeavor to fulfill the duties of mutual charity, each one assisting the other in his temporal needs, but still more in his spiritual wants, for the love of God, and exercising a tender solicitude that all over whom we have any influence should serve God and live according to His divine law. For, by confessing and practising the precepts of that One only true and beatifying faith we can truly serve Him, and become forever blessed.

It is faith, also, which infuses into our hearts the feeling that we not only have strength sufficient, but possess the will to live in such a manner as to keep constantly before our eyes the truths of our holy faith, and to have frequent recourse to the means of salvation, which Christ bequeathed to His Church—prayer, union with Christ in the most holy Sacrament, and reflection upon the examples of the good who have gone before us, and who, without a single exception, have conquered through the strength of this divine faith.

Very justly does St. Peter cry out to us: “Seize the shield of faith, upon which all the poisonous darts of the temptations of the world, the flesh, and

the devil fall powerless, and rebound harmless." St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Hebrews, whose words, as often as we hear them, never fail to animate, confirm, and encourage us in the consoling truth, says: "By faith, Abel offered to God a sacrifice, and obtained a testimony that he was just. By faith, Henoch was translated to heaven, and received the testimony that he was pleasing to God. By faith, Noe was instituted heir of justice. By faith, Abraham obtained the promise that his posterity should be multiplied, even as the stars in the sky, and that all generations should be blessed through him. By faith, Moses passed through the Red Sea with the children of Israel. By faith, the walls of Jericho were rased to the ground. And, what shall I furthermore say of all the prophets and just men who were persecuted, stoned to death by their enemies, and deprived of life by the sword. All were proved by faith, and obtained the crown of victory."

And, therefore, we have so great a cloud of witnesses, particularly if we look at the multitude of those who, since the earthly life of Christ, conquered by faith and entered upon the joys of heaven.

Of this divine virtue we are especially reminded by God the Father: "The words which I make known to you," says Christ, "I have brought from heaven from my Father;" and the Apostles' Creed begins with the words: "I believe in God the Father." He it is Who is the Source of all revelation, and Who has sent His only-begotten Son to announce it to us.

The second of the divine virtues is *Hope*, by which we confidently trust that God will lead us to the possession of that eternal beatitude, for which He has created us; for God, Who is truth and infinite goodness, wishes it infinitely more than man does, or can desire it. Therefore He is always ready to give us every means by which we may attain the consummation of that work.

And what, indeed, could be more fitted to strengthen us in this assurance of faith, than an unfaltering hope in Christ, and a loving glance at Him, the incarnate Son of God! Remembering His Incarnation, we feel, in the innermost depths of our hearts, the truth of the words of St. Paul, when he cries out to us: "If God the Father has given to us His only-begotten Son Himself, has He not given us, through Him, all things?"

Well may the prophet exclaim: "They will look at Him Whom they have transfixed." Look at Him to regret the sins you have committed; but also look at Him to be saved through Him, strengthened and enlightened through His imitation, and aided by His holy grace, to walk in the way of perfection. Let the cost be what it may, even the loss of all you hold dearest on earth. Do this and you will be saved. Follow the example of Abraham, the father of the faithful, who, as St. Paul testifies, "hoped against hope," and in this manner obtained the promise that, through him, all generations on earth should be blessed and redeemed.

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Therefore the same Apostle of nations has every reason to say to us: "Through hope, we were rescued;" and what, my brethren, can so certainly and speedily bestow upon us this power of holy hope as the faithful remembrance of God the Son, Who became man for us?

The third divine virtue which urges us to serve God, is divine *Love*, of which the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity reminds us, the Holy Ghost.

By God the Holy Ghost is represented the essential love of the Father to the Son, and the Son to the Father; therefore the Apostle adds: "And the greatest of these three is charity."

Yes, this love towards God is what will strengthen and animate our desire to serve God, and to fulfill His holy will, not only by leading the life of a pious Catholic, but by striving after perfection.

We are told by St. Paul: "The love of Christ urges us." It inspires us with courage to make the resolution to glorify God by our holy lives, and to propagate His kingdom. "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Is it ignominy, or the sword, or persecution?" All these we conquer through the strength of love; for love is strong as death,—if a man should give all the substance of his house, he shall despise it as nothing. Such is the declaration of Holy Scripture in the old Testament.

Nay, more: The most active life in the service of God, if it were not beautified and ennobled by love, would be of no avail in the sight of God; and even if

we were, as the Apostle says, "to deliver our bodies to be burned, and have not charity, it would profit us nothing."

Such is the influence of the three divine virtues in their relation to the Three Divine Persons upon our lives, as we become more and more devoted to the service of God.

As it was written of God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost: "And these three are One," the same can also be said of the three divine virtues. They have their origin in God; they have been instilled into our hearts by the Lord Himself. They are one in their effects, for no one lives in the light of faith, if his faith be truly an active and meritorious one, who does not at the same time live in the fervor of hope and love.

And, my dear brethren, the more lively our faith is, the more firm is our hope, and the more ardent our love towards God.

These three virtues are one, indeed, for they lead us to the possession of our ultimate aim and end, which is no other than God Himself.

Let us, therefore, daily endeavor to increase in our hearts the strength and fervor of these three divine virtues, through constant remembrance and adoration of the mystery of the Most Holy Trinity, and our faith will one day be changed to sight, our hope into possession, and our love to a perfect, an eternal union with God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.—
Amen.

THIRD SERMON.

“In Him we live and move and be.”—Acts xvii, 28.

IF the various festivals of the Church should serve to animate our zeal in the service of God, this is in an especial manner true of the feast celebrated by the Church to-day; for where is the Christian who could think of the Triune God, reflect upon this mystery of faith, and meditate upon the relation in which we stand to the Three Divine Persons, and not be penetrated with feelings of the most profound adoration, heartfelt thanksgiving, and grateful love? And who indeed could cherish in his soul such affections without renewing at the same time the firm resolution to manifest these dispositions of heart towards God in his life?

But, beloved in the Lord Jesus, if we indeed wish to remember our glorious vocation as children of the true Church, and to lead lives dedicated to the service of our Creator, let us not forget that, as members of the militant Church, we must fight and conquer, for there are three of the most vigilant adversaries that man could have, lying in wait to entrap and ensnare us to our endless ruin.

Day and night they watch and wait, putting forth every seductive wile to tempt the human race and drag numberless souls to perdition.

To these terrible foes may also be applied the words of Holy Scripture: “And these three are one.” One

in their origin, one in their effects, one in their diabolical tendency and aim.

Even as faith, hope, and charity, in their activity, comprise in themselves the true service of God, so the world, the flesh, and the devil, on the contrary, signify apostasy from Him, and constitute the service of the devil.

O Mary, Immaculate Virgin, who didst crush the serpent's head, obtain for us an ardent zeal in the service of thy divine Son!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, for the greater honor and glory of God.

If a Christian, a member of the Holy Catholic Church, would dedicate his life wholly to the service of God, then it should be a life animated by faith, hope, and charity; and these three being one, will influence his every act. What arrays itself against such a life is that triple power—the *world*, the *flesh*, the *devil*; and “these three” are also “one,” for they lead to the work of the devil and to separation from God. The truth of this will become clear to us if we place the three divine virtues in contrast to these three evil powers. The former are essential to salvation; the latter will lead to perdition.

To enter with zeal upon the service of God we must first have a lively faith—the same faith which Christ imparted through the Prophets, through the Apostles, and through *Himself* to the world.

The true faith was proved by miracles, and from the first day of creation down to the present time the word of this faith resounds through the whole universe; for there is not a single word which the divine lips of the Saviour uttered that did not send forth light to illumine the soul of man, while man on his part is fully conscious that *of himself* he could never discern the path of salvation. He is ignorant of the origin of what is morally evil, the means by which sin is blotted out, and the rewards or punishments which await us hereafter.

One would think that the world would be full of desire to receive the light of faith and instruction therein; but, nevertheless, whole nations still rest in the shadow of death, and grope in the darkness of infidelity and heresy. They care little or nothing for the fate of their souls in the approaching eternity.

And what, my brethren, is the reason of this?

Let us glance at the first inimical power and say it is the *flesh*. Man will not deprive himself of the most trifling enjoyment, but loves all that the world can give, especially in regard to carnal desires. But faith speaks the word, and the duty of conquering self and corrupt human nature, and saving the soul, becomes clear.

"Go," said Christ to His disciples, "and preach to the world." "What, O Lord?" "Proclaim unto man that if he do not penance, he must perish everlastingly." "Whosoever would follow Me, must deny himself." Consider this, O Christians! "But those

who belong to Christ," exclaims St. Paul, "have their flesh, with its desires, crucified;" and again: "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of Christ."

Here we find the reason why heathenism, which adored its own vices as deities, rejected, and still rejects, the faith of Christ. Is not that arch-enemy of the Christian name, Mohametanism, but another name for the pleasures of the flesh? Whence came the introduction of Protestantism into the world?

Every one knows that it originated in the broken vows of a faithless nun and a perjured priest, and in the adultery and polygamy of a lustful king. Ask the missionaries, who go over the whole world, what is generally the greatest obstacle to the conversion of the heathens, and for reply they will tell you that the power which combats but too successfully their zealous efforts, is the flesh.

Even in regard to those who believe in the true Church, and are known as her children, what weakens and renders fruitless their faith? What causes those who boast so loudly of being Catholics, to resemble whitened sepulchers, and puts their salvation in the greatest danger? It is impurity. Yes, it renders their souls a thousand times more hateful in the sight of God than if they were heretics, Jews, or infidels; for they possess the light of faith, yet abuse it, to their perdition. Yes, the flesh is a tyrant to all who, perhaps for years, have worn its heavy chains. They may be, to all appearances, Catholics, but this terrible slavery destroys the effect of

every grace, and renders useless every good work they perform, even to the changing of the reception of the sacraments into sacrileges.

Yes, my brethren, such are the fatal consequences of an inordinate desire to gratify the lusts of the flesh, that insatiate monster which deprives its hapless victims of their rank in the army of the living God, and sends them, wretched beings, to the service of the king of hell.

The second disposition of the heart, which ennobles the life of the Christian who devotes himself to the service of God, is *hope*. This divine virtue leads him to seek after the things which are above, that, by fulfilling every duty of his state of life, he may lay up a rich store of merits for heaven. This can be wonderfully increased by the exercise of a heroic patience in poverty, sickness, or any trials which the Lord may please to send him.

The hostile power which prevents or destroys the effect of holy hope, is the *world*. By the word *world* we are to understand that multitude of men, who live for no other purpose than to enjoy the goods and pleasures of earth, and to strive after its honors and wealth. The unhappy influence of the perverse inclination to follow the example of the children of the world in their greater solicitude for earthly than heavenly things, is no less subversive of good, than is that of the flesh.

The first beatitude which Christ proclaimed is: "Blessed are the poor." On the contrary, "Woe to the rich." "You can not serve God and mammon."

The sole thought of the worldling is to possess and amass, to live and enjoy for as long a duration as possible, forgetful of the truth that the longest life is but as a few brief moments when compared to eternity.

The world!—it takes not time to consider whether the Church established by Christ be true or not; it cares not for the promises of faith in regard to the life to come. Speak to the worldly man of spiritual things, and he listens with weariness and disgust. Heaven may be heaven, with all its promises, for all the interest he takes. But change the subject to some means of amassing wealth or promoting his temporal welfare, and he can not evince too great an interest. The same is true of the honors of the world. All are anxious to take as exalted a position as possible, frequently sacrificing principle to obtain it; and thus, through a slavish fear of man, they falter in good, and perhaps prove entirely false to their allegiance to God.

Charity is the third divine virtue which leaves its impress on the life devoted to the service of God. It is charity which inspires us to make every effort to manifest, by an entire union with Him, that we are His in poverty and abundance, honor and dishonor, sickness and health, time and eternity.

The heart which is inflamed with this love, has one only desire, which is, to glorify God, to be united to Him in perfect indifference to creatures, which it is willing to possess or reject, as God wills.

In never-ceasing opposition to this disposition of heart is enlisted the *devil*. The standard which Luci-

fer raised in heaven, represented pride, self-conceit, and self-adoration; and those who walk under it no longer wish to fulfill God's holy will. An inordinate love of creatures prevents them in a thousand ways.

Behold here the destructive influence of the world, the flesh, and the devil. "And these three are one." One in their origin, which dates back to the downfall of our first parents in Paradise; one in their effects against the influence of faith, hope, and charity, whose aim is union with God in the present and future life; while that of the three inimical powers is eternal separation from Him, apostasy from Christ, an eternity of pain, and endless despair.

In conclusion, therefore, beloved in Christ, may the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost protect us, and preserve us in united love, compassion, and grace, from these three enemies of our salvation, so terrible to contend with—the world, the flesh, and the devil.—Amen!

FEAST OF CORPUS CHRISTI.

FIRST SERMON.

“Oh, if thou didst know the gift of God, and Who it is that speaks to thee.”—John iv, 10.

THE fairest month, the loveliest flowers, the brightest skies, the sweetest music, the most brilliant lights, the most fragrant incense, and the ardent love of devout hearts unite to do honor to this feast, which is so essentially one of love, commemorating, as it does, the perpetual presence of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament among His faithful children.

On the eve of His passion—that eve so sad, and yet so replete with holy joy—Christ, my dearest brethren, as you all well know, instituted and bequeathed this precious boon to us; but, as the Church, in Holy Week, is entirely absorbed in meditating upon His bitter sorrows, she wishes her children to participate therein. Full of faith, this tender Mother is overwhelmed with mournful memories when she casts a glance at the Lamb of God “which taketh away the sins of the world” at the cost of such a tremendous sacrifice.

It is true she entones the “Gloria” at the Mass on Holy Thursday, celebrated in commemoration of this Most Blessed Sacrament, as, for a few brief moments,

the tide of thanksgiving, which surges over her heart, absorbs the grief that lies in its depths; and this grateful joy finds vent in the ringing of bells, the organ's pealing sound, and the Gloria's triumphant strain. But, suddenly, all is hushed, and the memory of the pain and anguish crowded into one short week in the life of our Lord comes on again, and no sound of joy is heard until the Resurrection is at hand.

Then follows the solemn commemoration of the various divine facts in the order of salvation. After Easter comes the Ascension of the Lord, and the descent of the Holy Ghost on Pentecost, which beautiful wreath of festivals is closed by the Feast of the Most Holy Trinity.

When this wreath, in which have been twined so many holy thoughts and fervent desires, is laid before the throne of the Most High, the Church avails herself of the Thursday immediately succeeding; and, obeying the impulse of her joy and gratitude for that precious and heavenly gift, the Blessed Sacrament, summons her children to take part in the celebration, and calls upon heaven and earth to assist therein. And as though the walls, even of the most spacious edifice, were too limited for the excess of her devotion, she leads the rejoicing multitude to the great temple of Nature, and enjoins them to bring the fairest flowers of the garden to beautify the pathway over which the King of kings is to be borne on high by the priests of His Church. And so, in every part of the world, thousands and millions of loving hearts

send forth the anthem of praise, and receive the benediction of Jesus in the Most Adorable Sacrament.

Let us briefly consider what there is in the divine gift thus bestowed upon us through Christ. The different names which the Church applies to the Blessed Sacrament will assist us in this.

O Mary, from whom Jesus did take the flesh and blood which we receive in the Most Holy Sacrament, obtain for us a most ardent love to Him in this sublime mystery!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, for the greater honor and glory of God!

“If thou didst but know the gift of God which is imparted to thee, and Who it is Who speaks to thee.”

These words of Christ, addressed to the Samaritan woman, relate, in their application, also to every Christian soul who appears before Christ in the Sacrament of the Altar. In the strictest sense of the word, no one has ever existed, even among the greatest saints, who could behold the miracle of miracles distinctly before him, and discern its grandeur, majesty, and wondrous power. It is a divine fact, to which, with a particular emphasis, the words of the Psalmist may be applied: “God hath created a wonder of wonders; He hath given food to them that fear Him.”

The presence of Christ, by the changing of the bread and wine into His body and blood, is a divine fact which, even to the understanding of the angels, remains in-

comprehensible. But we are, nevertheless, able to understand so much of the ineffable majesty, sanctity, and efficacy of the Most Holy Sacrament, that we feel encouraged and impelled not only to join in the rejoicings of the Church with our whole hearts, for this day alone, but to dedicate our entire lives to the adoration of Christ therein, and, so to say, live only for Him, present in the Most Holy Sacrament.

The different names by which the Church distinguishes this most divine gift indicate, in themselves, the individual graces which we must consider in order to learn to know it, and zealously use it, in all its greatness.

The Church calls it, first: "The Sacrament of *Faith*," and most justly, for there is present the Founder of faith, Jesus Christ. Here we have the opportunity to make the act of faith in its entire extent, in all its strength.

With every act of faith man confesses indeed to believe the Church as the infallible teacher, given us by God to guide us in all matters of faith; and so he believes and confesses, although he *sees not* what he believes, upon the word of the Church alone. For example: He believes and confesses that original sin is washed away by the Sacrament of Baptism, although he most certainly does not see it. But now, in regard to the Holy Eucharist, man believes in spite of what *he sees* and feels; and therein consists the triumph of faith and the excellence of the act when we, as children of the Church, confess the doctrine of the Real Presence.

At the same time, this sacrament also points to the Church herself as administering and dispensing the mysteries of grace in the New Law.

She designates this Blessed Sacrament as the *Sacrifice* of the New Testament. It is, in fact, the Sun of the divine service therein. Wherever her validly ordained ministers, the priests of God, are, there also is celebrated the Sacrifice of the Mass. There the means of salvation are effectively distributed; there a brilliant light illumines the pathway to heaven. What a motive for rejoicing!

The Church also calls this sacrament the bread of the *strong*. To possess the light of true faith is certainly an immeasurable happiness, but it depends on an obligation fulfilled. We must live in accordance with its principles; for from him who has received much, much will be required.

But we are too often ready to falter and well nigh faint in our efforts to live as faithful members of the Holy Church, free from sin, strong and invincible in the combat with Satan, zealous and full of courage to advance in the practice of virtue. What a sweet solace it is, therefore, to the heart, that the Church can point to the Most Holy Sacrament with the assurance that it is the frequent and worthy reception of this august gift which deadens the power of passion in its very beginning, so that it can be easily overcome.

As to our efforts to attain perfection, to which holy faith challenges us, how could we be wanting in grace

if we receive Jesus Himself, the source of all grace? How intimately are not we united to Him through the reception of Holy Communion? He, the Almighty,—benign, infinite, and omniscient,—is with us, the knowledge of which can not fail to multiply our hopes of heaven, and increase our strength to resist temptation.

Yes, so wonderful are the effects of this Sacrament, that the holy fathers can not find words to express their astonishment and admiration. They say, even as wax melts into wax, and as air fills space, so do the Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Christ, become united with us in Holy Communion. We become, as it were, one with Him, in regard to His Humanity united with His Divinity. What a motive of rejoicing for a soul that loves Jesus with the desire to be dissolved and be with Him!

The reception of the Blessed Sacrament bestows upon us a foretaste of heaven, as is intimated by the prayer of the Church in the Mass for Corpus Christi: “O God, make us partakers of the possession of Thee forever, the delights of which are foreshadowed on earth by Thy Flesh and Blood.”

The Church, therefore, styles the Most Holy Sacrament the *manna of heaven*, containing all sweetness.

A life wholly devoted to faith has also its trials, and, at times, they are very bitter; but let the afflicted soul once enter into the personal knowledge and love of Christ, by a devout intercourse with Him in the Sacrament of Love, and a balm for all those troubles will

soon be found—"a manna having in it all sweetness and delight." There is no sorrow for which it does not bring relief.

The Church also calls this sacrament the *bread of Angels*. Those pure spirits hover day and night over the altars in the tabernacles of which the Blessed Sacrament is kept; and its presence fills them with inexpressible delight, as we learn from St. Peter. Our joy, however, should be more exquisite still; for, Him whom *they* adore *we* receive, and take into our very hearts—a happiness which certainly foreshadows that of heaven. Ah, no! we must not envy the angels; rather should *we* be subjects of their holy envy.

The Church calls the Blessed Sacrament the *Viaticum*—the pledge of our future glory; for Christ Himself assures us that "whosoever eats of this Bread will live forever." "He abides in Me, and I in him." "He will have eternal life."

What incentives to hope can be found in these assertions of Christ, on which we can fully rely as coming from the Eternal Truth. Even if they had not proceeded from the Divine Lips, our own intrinsic consciousness would say: "Never, ah! never would our Saviour say to the Christian—who has devoted himself to the love of this Most Holy Sacrament, lived only for it, remained in its presence, received it in Holy Communion—never, I say, would He utter to him the terrible words: "Depart from Me!" No; rather would He address the faithful soul, cheered by the holy Viaticum, with the consoling invitation:

“Come now, faithful soul, behold My glory not shadowed by the mystic vails which shroud My Majesty on earth. Enter into the knowledge of My beatitude, as thou hast entered into the enjoyment of My love through the Most Blessed Sacrament of the Altar.”—Amen!

SECOND SERMON.

“Blessed are they that have not seen, and have believed.”—John xx, 29.

“**B**LESSED are they who see not, and yet believe;” this assurance of the Lord to those who surrounded Him, when He, in visible form, dwelt upon this earth, verifies itself in all its truth and importance, when we apply it to His sacramental presence on our altars.

Here, indeed, is the same Jesus present, who at Bethlehem reposed in the manger, who lived at Nazareth with Mary and Joseph, journeyed through Palestine, and died upon Calvary. It is the same Jesus Whom, at this very moment, the angels and all the celestial inhabitants now contemplate in His glory.

St. Augustine was wont to say that the dearest wish of his heart was, that he could have seen Jesús in His visible presence on earth. This is but natural; yet if we consider what advantages and graces are bestowed upon us through the personal presence of Christ in the Most Holy Sacrament, we might venture to say to the great Saint that, although we certainly do not enjoy the consolation of seeing Jesus with the eyes of the body, as did those who had personal intercourse with Him, yet the presence of Christ in the Most Holy Sacrament, after His ascension into Heaven, is accompanied with privileges which makes it preferable even to that happiness, for it reveals to us sources of

grace which were unknown to those who lived with Christ on earth.

Let us consider to-day the arguments on which this assertion is based, and we shall then celebrate the Feast of Corpus Christi with so much greater joy and gratitude.

O Mary, Mother of Jesus, blessed are thine eyes, which beheld Jesus upon earth; but obtain for us the grace to look at Him in the Most Holy Sacrament with the eyes of faith, in union with the love of thy faithful heart!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, for the greater glory of God!

Jesus said to His disciples: "Blessed are the eyes which see what you see."

The prophets most ardently longed for it, and this happiness was not their portion.

Even Abraham did not enjoy it, and nevertheless, I say we have no reason to envy those who saw Jesus on earth, if we faithfully and lovingly look at Him in the Most Holy Sacrament, and earnestly avail ourselves of the graces which His real presence discloses to us therein. This will become evident if we think particularly of those four hallowed places in the life of our Lord, which are so rich in sacred memories of the redemption and deliverance of mankind through Christ, and rise up with especial splendor before our eyes.

They are : the Grotto at Bethlehem ; the house at Nazareth ; the Hall of the last Supper at Jerusalem, and the cross on Calvary.

I said, first, the *Grotto* and Crib at Bethlehem. There are many circumstances in the life of Christ recorded in the gospel ; but in the estimation of every faithful, contemplative, loving soul, those four holy spots especially call forth in our hearts the wish that we had seen Jesus on earth.

Have we not, most beloved in Christ, frequently longed to have been, for instance, among the watching shepherds, when suddenly the angels, surrounded with the glory of the Lord, addressed to them the welcome words : “ Behold, I bring you glad tidings of great joy, for this day is born to you a Saviour Who is Christ the Lord : and you shall find the Infant wrapped in swaddling clothes in a manger ? ”

And they obeyed, and were so highly favored as to find the divine Child, the Infant Saviour, Who was to open heaven for man. Oh, with what rapture and delight, with what affections of gratitude and love did they prostrate themselves at the feet of the Infant Lord. Happy, thrice happy shepherds !

After the Grotto of Bethlehem we come to the house of *Nazareth*, the dwelling of Christ for thirty years—and Palestine, which He traversed during His apostolic journeys. What deeply interesting, what sacred, what holy places : and yet the tabernacle, where Christ is present in the Most Holy Sacrament, surpasses them all. Why ?

Because we are permitted to enjoy this Divine Presence more permanently, and for a longer period of time. The shepherds remained but a little while, and then hastened again away from Christ: and God knows, my brethren, how few among them were so blessed as even to behold Him again on earth, or, in after life, ever heard a single word from His divine and gracious lips. In Nazareth it was granted only to Mary and Joseph to enjoy the presence of the Lord; and as to Palestine, through which Christ traveled, preaching as He went, the multitude saw the Lord on certain occasions only for some hours or days; and those who were permitted to live in continual intimacy with Him, as the Apostles, were very few; while in the Most Holy Sacrament, on the contrary, Christ is present day and night, and we can commune with Him whenever we wish. Here He is, as it were, so enwrapt in the sacramental forms that He can not depart.

He is, so to say, compelled to hear us. He is ever ready, and welcomes us to His Divine Presence at whatever moment we please to come.

When Jacob wrestled with the Lord, in that wonderful struggle during the night, and the Lord said: "Leave Me, Jacob;" the latter answered: "No, Lord, I will never leave You until You have blessed me."

Through Christ abiding in our tabernacles we are permitted, as it were, to force Him to stay with us, and to hear us. Oh, what a happiness! Oh, that we only knew rightly how to value this inestimable favor! Oh,

that we would but remember how Jesus is left to remain alone in so many churches, and manifest our love to Him by daily visits to the Blessed Sacrament!

The third mystery of faith, in which the fullness of the manifestation and love of God glorifies itself through the institution of the Most Holy Sacrament, is the upper chamber at Jerusalem, the scene of the *Last Supper*.

Who can conceive a more sublime, a more elevating sight, than that presented by Christ at the Last Supper, surrounded by His disciples, when, taking in His blessed hands bread and wine, He looked up to heaven, gave thanks, and said : " This is My Body—this is the chalice of My Blood."

At that moment His divine eyes glanced over the whole earth, through all the vicissitudes of future time, and beheld all the honor and glory which He would give His heavenly Father through this His presence; and also the many streams of grace which, as fountains of living water, would flow into the hearts of His own, through this Sacrament.

How did His heart exult and rejoice as He distributed it with His own hands to His disciples! Who would not wish to have had the happiness of receiving Holy Communion at the Last Supper from the hands of Christ Himself? And nevertheless: " Blessed are they who have not seen, and yet believed." Christ administered the Sacrament to His disciples but once, on the occasion of the Last Supper, which they partook of together; while we have the happiness of re-

ceiving Holy Communion as often as we wish, even daily, and during our whole lives, until we shall one day receive it as viaticum to help us on our heavenward way. Had we lived at the time of Christ, and beheld Him in His visible presence on earth, we might have had the privilege of communicating but once. And all those who lived at that time, even when, later on, they were converted to the Church, did not enjoy this happiness in their early years as we did.

Yes, dearest Lord, by far better is it for us to behold Thee in faith in our midst in this Sacrament of Thy love, if we, on our part, avail ourselves of the privilege of receiving Thee with the zeal and fervor of the saints.

The fourth mystery of faith, from which shine forth such brilliant rays of light, that we behold most clearly the miracle of God's mercy for the rescue of mankind, is *Calvary*, the cross.

Oh, blessed the eyes which, with Mary, St. John, and the penitent Magdalen, beheld the Redeemer lifted on the cross, in tears and blood, looking up to heaven, 'crying to His eternal Father for mercy: "Father, forgive!" Mercy and justice have kissed each other.

Mankind is saved! It is consummated!

Christ bows His head and expires. His features assume the livid hue of death.

"And behold, a soldier hastens up the mount and thrusts his spear into the side of the crucified Saviour,"—opens His heart, and blood and water, the sym-

bol of the Church, flow from the open side of the heavenly Adam, who sank to slumber on the cross.

Oh, what a spectacle! St. Bridget, to whom the suffering Lord appeared in a vision, which made such a vivid impression upon her that ever afterwards the memory so moved her heart that she melted into tears at the very remembrance, fully realized what it cost Him to procure the salvation of the world.

And yet, how abundantly is this sacrifice renewed by the presence of the Sacred Host on the altar, at the celebration of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass!

Most certainly, as the Council of Trent expressly remarks: "It is the same sacrifice which Christ consummated on the cross, with this difference only: that the one on Calvary was exteriorly a bloody one, that in the Mass is unbloody. But it is the same sacrifice, the same oblation, the same High Priest, who offers it by the hands of the priest, and the same plenitude of divine grace which it contains, for the glory of God, for the obtaining of new graces, for our reconciliation with God."

And with all these we have the advantage of being present at this sacrifice, not only once, but often; yes, innumerable times in our lives.

Therefore, if we had been permitted to choose, either to be present on Calvary, when Christ on the cross redeemed the world, or to be so favored as to assist daily at Mass, then, O Christians! our hearts should say: "My Lord Jesus! better to me are the graces which can be mine through the sacrifice of

Holy Mass, which are even more abundant for me, because they are constantly renewed, from the rising of the sun till the going down of the same." Therefore, let us beseech the Lord that faith may so entirely penetrate our hearts, that we may receive the graces, which Christ distributes in the Most Holy Sacrament to us, with the most grateful and ardent love.

Let us do this in an especial manner to-day, as we kneel in adoration at the four altars erected and adorned for this glorious feast, and we will feel ourselves most powerfully impelled to cry out, from the depths of our hearts, before Christ in the Most Holy Sacrament: "What shall I give to the Lord for all He hath given unto me, through this Sacrament of His real presence?" And the loving voice of Christ will sweetly say: "My son, give Me thy heart!"—Amen!

THIRD SERMON.

"This is the day which the Lord hath made ; let us be glad and rejoice therein."—Psalm cxvii, 24.

THE Church, on this day of jubilee, loves to call her children to the house of God, from which they go forth with hymns of praise and prayers in honor of the Blessed Sacrament, which is borne, under a richly ornamented canopy, by one of the Lord's anointed ministers, to the altars erected by the faithful, to receive the blessing of the Lord. That this benediction may be poured out so as to bring forth the richest fruit, it is essential that our hearts be animated with the dispositions proper to receive so great a boon.

To effect this, the consideration of the anthem, which the Church makes use of in the administration of the Blessed Sacrament to the faithful, will be most illustrative. The anthem runs as follows :

"O sacrum convivium!" "O sacred banquet in which Christ is received, the heart replenished with grace, and the pledge of eternal life bestowed!"

These words indicate the particular graces which we, as Catholics, enjoy through Jesus Christ in the Blessed Eucharist ; and which should call forth our most profound adoration and ardent gratitude, our fervent petition and sincere love and desire.

O Mary, obtain for us that disposition of heart in

which thou didst, in ages past, entone the "Magnificat," remembering the graces which God bestowed upon thee through Jesus Christ!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, for the greater honor and glory of God!

"O sacred banquet in which Christ is received!" The consecration, through which our Lord becomes present on our altars, reminds us most vividly, as the holy fathers remark of the great grace, of the *Incarnation* of the Son of God—the greatest of all graces—the source of all the rest. Every thing depended on whether God would stretch forth His arm to save the fallen human race or not. He did; and their Redemption was accomplished by the Incarnation of His divine Son, the pledge of which is the consecration when the Body and Blood of Christ are on the altar, instead of the bread and wine, which a moment before were there.

God, in His justice, did not spare the Angels, yet He extended His clemency to *us*. Sing praise to Him, for His mercy endureth forever; and this infinite mercy leads Him to impart to us the merits of redemption in all their plenitude, because we are children of His Church—the only one in which salvation is to be found; and we possess, therefore, the light of true faith, and every means of salvation,—yes, even Jesus Christ Himself in the Blessed Sacrament. What a grace! Millions and millions have lived and died without it, and yet it is within our reach! Let us, then,

pour forth our grateful thanks to God for having given us a place in His kingdom on earth. Most beloved in Christ, it was for no merit of ours that we have been called to the Catholic faith. There are millions who do not celebrate Corpus Christi to-day, who do not with us feast upon this sacred banquet. But this privilege and blessing calls for a certain acknowledgment, which is to show our appreciation of it by a truly Catholic life.

The most efficacious means for promoting the increase of grace in our hearts is a lively faith in the real presence of Christ, united with the determination to derive as much benefit as possible from it through our frequent presence before Him. Let the foregoing reflections fill your minds during the course of the procession to the first altar. Think of the unmerited grace of being a Catholic; whisper to your Lord how ardently you wish to live in accordance with the teachings of that divine faith, and to induce others to participate with you in this happiness.

Make, at the same time, acts of reparation, that you have heretofore thought so little of it yourself, reciting the "Angelic Salutation" with so little devotion, and manifesting so little interest in propagating the kingdom of the Church. Make acts of reparation, also, for the whole human race, which, for so many years, in so many countries, has so ungratefully rejected this grace, derided, persecuted, and put to death the Apostles and missionaries whom Jesus sent to win their hearts to listen to His gracious call. Say to your Lord

that, as far as it lies in your power, you will labor for the propagation of the faith; and, full of the fervor of this intention, to assist the Church, and spread the knowledge and love of Christ, receive the benediction at the first altar.

“O sacred banquet in which Christ is received!” These words indicate a second blessing, which is imparted to us, children of the Church, through the presence of Christ in the Most Holy Sacrament, which is His perpetual *Presence* among us.

Although it is over eighteen hundred years since our Lord personally dwelt upon earth and ascended into heaven, He, nevertheless, remains with us in this sacrament, and is ever ready to distribute more abundant graces to us than He would have done had we beheld Him then. We can repair to the tabernacle where, under the veil of the sacramental forms, He abides like a captive—held by the chain of His love for us. We can hasten thither, and pour forth the necessities of our souls, the love of our hearts.

Let us, therefore, make firm resolutions frequently to avail ourselves of this privilege, by *visiting* Jesus even daily, if possible, in this Blessed Sacrament. If Christendom would but accept the glorious truth, what throngs would seek the temple of the living God, and open their hearts before Christ the Lord, to speak to Him in loving confidence. But have you not also something to reproach yourselves with in this regard? Do you not spend weeks and even months in entire forgetfulness of the presence of Christ on our altars?

With the desire of making reparation, then, at the second altar, kneel down before your God. Bow down in adoration, and receive benediction with the firm resolve often to visit those churches wherein He dwells, to petition for graces from the fountain of His wounds.

“O sacred banquet, at which the heart is filled with graces!” The third source of grace, which the Blessed Sacrament bestows upon us, is the blessing of *Holy Mass*—the sacrifice of the New Law. This wonderful sacrament is, indeed, the Sun of divine service which will shed its beams over the whole universe to the very end of time. The sacrifice of Christ on the cross is, indeed, the principal source whence issue all the graces of Redemption. But the sacrifice of the Mass is the very same, bestowing daily abundance of graces on all who seek them and determine to use them. O what a motive for joy and gratitude! What honor is given, what homage is offered to the triune God, by the daily sacrifice of the Mass!

There is not one moment in the day, not one moment in the night, in which the sacrifice of the Mass is not offered up in one or another quarter of the globe. Not one single moment wherein some priest in one or another portion of the world is not elevating the Sacred Host to heaven, surrounded with a glory and splendor which our eyes can not behold, and beside which the glory of the saints and angels seems dim. There is not one moment of time in which this Adorable Victim is not presented to the Eternal

Father—an offering so precious that all the praise and homage ever offered by the Angels, or that ever will be offered, is as nothing compared to it.

Then let us, at the third altar, pour forth our thanks to God for every Holy Mass which has ever been said since the Apostles first celebrated theirs, and for the very last one which will be offered up before the Judge of the living and the dead shall come “to judge the world by fire.” Let us return thanks for every grace which has been conferred upon us during all the Holy Masses at which we have ever devoutly assisted, and make acts of reparation for all the outrages endured by Jesus from us by our neglecting to assist at Mass, or by hearing it without proper devotion; also for *all* that He has had to suffer, even from the children of His Church, during the celebration of the divine mysteries.

“And through which we receive the pledge of eternal glory.” The fourth motive for gratitude and reparation is the happiness of receiving the *Holy Communion*. If the fathers could not find words to express the magnitude of the grace which is imparted to us by its worthy reception, much less are we able to express the thanks which are due to our Lord for so great a boon.

We are objects of envy to the very Angels. They wonder and adore when we receive our Saviour; when we are united to the divinity and humanity of Christ; when we hold captive the Author of grace, our God and Redeemer, in the poor dwelling of our hearts. Return thanks, O Christian, for every Holy Commun-

ion which has been administered since the Last Supper, and for those which will be given until the end of time. Thank God especially for every worthy Communion which you have received yourself; and beg of the Lord to grant you occasion, from this day forward, often to enjoy the same happiness. Beg Him also for grace to employ His presence in your hearts as profitably as possible; yes, in a manner so perfect as to initiate you into His personal love and knowledge.

Do not forget to make acts of reparation for all outrages and ingratitude, the horrible sacrileges, the innumerable unworthy communions, beginning with the crime of Judas, until the very last unworthy reception of the Most Holy Sacrament which will ever take place in the world. And, oh, if any one here present has been so wretched as to receive his Saviour into a heart disfigured by mortal sin, I beg of you repent before it is too late. Let not the sun go down without a sincere resolution to repair the evil by a good confession, and put it into execution the very first moment you can. Receive, then, with heartfelt thanksgiving, the benediction of Jesus Himself at the fourth altar.

These, dearly beloved in Christ, are the affections which should overwhelm us as we kneel at the different altars erected to do honor to the Blessed Sacrament. Then the benediction we receive will enable us to celebrate this day entirely in the spirit of the Holy Catholic Church.—Amen!

FEAST OF THE SACRED HEART.

FIRST SERMON.

“This is life everlasting that they may know Thee, and whom Thou hast sent, Jesus Christ.”—John xvii, 3.

AS the pulpit text which I have just read for you, dearly beloved in Christ, admonishes us, more is necessary for our salvation than faithfully to confess God the Father, and whom He has sent, Jesus Christ; for, if this confession is to deliver and save us, we must follow Christ by obeying the teachings of the faith He brought into the world.

The devils also confess God, and yet they remain devils; they also confess Jesus Christ, yet they are damned forever.

Therefore, St. Paul so expressly declares to the early Christians: “And what else do I require of you, by all I have told you, by word and by our epistle, than that you advance in the knowledge and love of Christ?” which means that, in proportion as this knowledge and love takes root in your heart, and increases and fructifies, so also will you, together with me, follow Jesus, and be saved through Him. These are the words of the Apostle of nations.

But it is precisely in this regard that a very great

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deficiency is generally manifested. Not to speak of those who know nothing of Jesus save what they have learned from history, and who are not members of the true faith, how many, even among those who call themselves Catholics, and, perhaps, live exteriorly as such, in reality know Him not! They know Him, as it were, only by name; they know Him not personally; and the knowledge they have of the divine Saviour exercises no beneficial influence upon their lives.

In this meditation, therefore, my dear brethren, I will endeavor to demonstrate, that a true veneration of the Sacred Heart of Jesus is the portal through which we must enter into the sanctuary of a sweet, a loving union, with Christ, an intimate, personal knowledge of the Saviour.

O Mary, who, as His Mother, didst know and love the Son of God, following Him with devoted care even to the foot of the cross, we pray thee, obtain for us the grace to know and love Him too.

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, for the greater glory of God!

Christ is, as holy faith teaches, the incarnate Son of God. That this knowledge may enkindle within us, and fan the fire of divine love, in so ardent a manner that we may imitate our divine Saviour, we must often meditate on the mystery of the Incarnation of the Son of God, of which a tender devotion to the

Sacred Heart can not fail to remind us. The Angels cherish the most profound veneration, and yet God did not become an angel—but a *man*. To this He was impelled by no other consideration than His love for us.

“I have loved thee with an eternal love, and drawn thee with merciful love to Me.” What a powerful motive for love and gratitude! God was pleased to create us, not only after His own image, but to take upon Himself our very nature, inexpressibly inferior as it is, and thus elevate it above the angelic nature. They possess not, like us, the privilege of calling him *brother*. Should not this urge us to listen to our Lord when he speaks thus to our hearts: “And now what else does thy God require of thee, than that thou shouldst love him?”

Christ, as God and man at the same time, is our Redeemer, Who shed His precious blood for us in that atoning sacrifice, completed through the infinite merits which accompanied all His divine actions; and He offered it as an expiation to the infinite justice of God. But if we wish fully to understand this tremendous sacrifice which Christ presented to His heavenly Father for every human soul, the love of Christ, and His character as Saviour of the world, must arise clearly before us, and *this* will be attained by looking into the depths of the Sacred Heart.

For “the redemption of the world” would have been realized by the first aspiration to which Christ gave utterance in His mother’s womb, at His Incarnation,

when He confessed before His Father: "Behold, here am I, and Thy law is in the midst of my heart." I have come to reconcile the human race with Thee.

This prayer was, as St. Paul assures us, already sufficient for the salvation and redemption of every member of the human family, for it was of an infinite value. But the overwhelming love of Jesus for us demanded something more than our mere redemption, for He wished to deliver us in a manner indicative of that love, so that our hearts might the more readily turn to Him. O how He wished us to follow His divine example, and make the merits of His life and death our own, no matter how great the cost!

And now, to understand this in the most effective manner, let us glance at His *heart*, and remember, at the same time, that Christ offered His life, sufferings, and death, to His heavenly Father, not only for all mankind, but for *every individual soul*; as if that soul had been the only one He came to save, as will be manifested, in the clearest light, by a glance at the Sacred Heart. You have a right to say this very heart beat in the breast of the Infant Jesus as He lay in the manger at Bethlehem, and offered the pains and griefs of infancy *for me*.

The circumcision, the flight into Egypt, the weary toil which marked His daily life at Nazareth, He offered for me! This Sacred Heart throbbed for me in every phase of His Apostolic life, and offered all *for me!*

This same heart throbbed for me in His breast at the

Last Supper, and throbbed for me when Jesus resolved to offer Himself daily in the Sacrament of His love, until the very end of time, to remain with me, to unite Himself with me, body and soul, divinity and humanity, in every holy Communion which it would be my privilege to receive.

It throbbed for me when, with prophetic vision, the Redeemer saw the many temptations which would surround me in life, and His precious blood burst forth from every pore, as Gethsemane's groves witnessed His terrible agony there. And, oh, how bitterly it throbbed when the cruel scourge laid open the quivering flesh to the very bone, and the aching brow was made to feel a keener pang from the pressure of the sharp thorns, put on in mockery of a crown, and the heavy cross was laid upon those weary shoulders until all that was human in the Son of God was well nigh crushed to earth. And at last the weary walk was over, but only to give place to new and bitter pain as the nails were driven through the sacred hands and feet. And now behold the Creator of heaven and earth hanging on the cross, a bleeding victim for our sins. Ah, then His Sacred Heart throbbed for me as He cried out to the eternal Father: "Father, forgive!" Then, when he yielded up the Ghost, behold, a soldier opened His heart, and from it fell the last drop of His precious blood—for *me*. I am redeemed, and with a Redemption superabundant indeed!

"They will see Whom they have pierced." These

are the inspired words of the prophet; yes, and they will adore the triumph of infinite mercy by which the greatest crime which a creature can commit, Deicide, became a source for the pardon of every sin, as St. Paul implies when he says: "Christ destroyed sin through sin upon the cross."

This open heart, this sacred wound, removed the vail which rested upon the work of *Redemption*. To glance at it, nay, to look into its *depths*, we can see the glimmer of a lovely light which illumines the work of the Saviour's mercy and love, penetrating our hearts with a longing to reciprocate that love which led him to purchase our salvation at the cost of life.

This Jesus is, as Saviour, the founder of that Church to which He confided His infinite merits, and the dispensation of the means of salvation. She rose from His heart in the symbol of blood and water, even as from the side of the sleeping Adam God called our mother Eve into existence. And behold us, without any merit of our own, members of this Church so holy and divine. What a motive for us, as children of this loving mother, to grow in the grace of God, and by constant intercourse with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, to grow also in His personal knowledge.

Yes! to look into the Heart of Jesus, gives us a glimpse, in all its splendor, of the majesty and sanctity of the one true Church, and can not fail to excite in us the most ardent desire and longing to live as her faithful children, grateful that we are so highly

avored as to *be* children of that glorious mother. It animates us to more earnest efforts to propagate the faith, over the whole world, according to the desire of the Sacred Heart.

This Lord and Saviour is, according to His Person, at once our Father, Friend, and Brother; the Spouse of our souls—Christ! He it is Who regained for us the right to enter heaven. He is our Brother, Who took upon Himself our nature; our Friend, Who provided for us as for Himself; and the Spouse of our souls—infinite goodness and greatness—Christ!

To behold all this we must look into the depths of His Sacred Heart. The world is full of brothers, friends, and spouses, but how different are they in the measure of love they bear to their own! In the open Heart of Jesus we behold, united, the hearts of loving fathers, brothers, and friends; and yet His love is greater than all! Did He not give the very last drop of blood from that heart, and am I not, therefore, right when I say: If we wish to attain to a knowledge of this dear Redeemer, in all His divine sweetness, we must cast frequent glances into the Sacred Heart, and seek refuge in its bleeding wound? We will then adorn our own hearts, so that we will one day be worthy to enter into an abode of eternal blessedness. Blessed St. Gertrude, devoted adorer of the Sacred Heart, obtain for us the grace to love it with *your* fervent love, and through a like imitation of its virtues, to share with you the glorious reward of its faithful servants.—Amen.

SECOND SERMON.

“For this cause I bow my knees to the Father, that you may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth of this mystery.”—Eph. iii, 14, 18.

“TO me, the least of all the saints, is given this grace to preach among the Gentiles, and to enlighten all men what is the dispensation of the mystery which hath been hidden from eternity in God, Who created all things.

“For this cause I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of Whom all paternity in heaven and earth is named,

“That He would grant you the grace to be strengthened by the power of His Spirit unto the inward man;

“That Christ may dwell by faith in your hearts: that being rooted and founded in charity, you may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth of this mystery;

“To know also the charity of Christ, which surpasseth all human knowledge.”

With these words to the Ephesians, and similar assurances in many passages of the Epistles which St. Paul wrote—not only for the faithful of his own day, but for those of all future time—the Apostle of nations exhorts us in the most expressive manner to advance in the knowledge of Christ.

And if we wish to comprehend the total height and depth, the entire breadth and length, of the love of Jesus,

we can only do so by looking into the depths of His Sacred Heart; and to make this clear, will be the object of my words to-day.

O Mary, Mother of the Divine Heart, obtain for us the grace to enter into the full knowledge of Christ's love for us, that we may meet it with faithful reciprocal love!

I speak in the holy name of Jesus, for the greater honor and glory of God!

To contemplate in its entire extent the love of Jesus Christ, and to open our hearts in true reciprocal love to the Lord, that He may dwell therein, we must go to the Sacred Heart and look into its *depths*. There, ah! there, we can behold in all its immensity a love so mighty that it drew Him away from the throne of His glory in heaven to earth, and urged Him not only to assume human nature, but by so doing, as St. Paul assures us, to *annihilate* Himself and take the form of a *slave*.

For, appearing as a man among men, He concealed His divinity before them; and although He wrought miracles, other men, with the Divine assistance, performed wonders still greater:—Moses, for instance, at the departure of the children of Israel from Egypt.

Men in general acknowledged Him so little as God, that they threatened to stone Him when He declared that He was. They persecuted at every occasion this meek Lamb of God, and at last nailed Him to

the cross. And what brought to such depths of humility the King of kings and Lord of lords? Because He chose not to appear as a powerful monarch, as a ruler over the whole universe, before whom all nations would tremble, but as a slave; for He entered this world as the subject of an emperor who governed only the Romans as free men, while those nations he had conquered were held in subjection. And therefore Christ suffered the death of the slave—crucifixion.

Why did He humble Himself so deeply? One glance into the Divine Heart will tell us that it was His merciful love to us.

Great God! what misery overwhelmed the human race, and what would have become of us if the arm of Thy infinite justice had not been stayed! But Christ the Son of God, equal in essence and nature to His eternal Father, wished, through love, to celebrate the triumph of His infinite mercy; and this love urged Him not only to grant pardon to penitent sinners, but to make satisfaction for them, and take upon Himself the justification for sin.

Not only, beloved in Christ, did He mean to pardon this or that sin, to forgive this or that sinner, but for every sin that would ever be committed, and for every sinner, if he were truly contrite, a gracious pardon would be found. Christ requires but one thing of the sinner—that he avails himself of those efficacious means of salvation to be found in the true Church, and takes refuge in His Sacred Heart.

Dearly beloved Christians, souls redeemed by the

blood of a God, reflect upon this precious truth ; and that you may realize the depth of His love for you, look at the Sacred Heart—look into its bleeding wound. The Almighty, the Omnipotent God, the gracious and merciful Saviour, comes from the heaven of His glory to afford us a certain refuge therein—to save us from that pit which the malice of sin has prepared for us in hell.

The Deluge prefigured the spiritual ruin which overwhelmed the whole human race. Now, Holy Scripture testifies that the waters thereof rose to the height of fifteen cubits above the loftiest mountains. This indicates the degree of malice which characterized the wickedness of mankind, it being greater than that of the fallen angels. *Their* sin was that pride which led them to wish to be like God ; while man, on the contrary, committed Deicide, as St. Peter, in his first sermon, called the Crucifixion, when he said : “The Author of life you have killed.”

This reproach applies not only to those Jews who personally laid hands on Christ, but to all men as sinners ; for St. Paul asserts : “Whosoever sins, crucifies God in his heart, tramples His precious Blood under foot.” And yet God forgives on account of the merits of Christ ! Whom ? The greatest sinner if he but repent. And what means does He choose for this ? Let us adore and wonder, for the commission of the greatest possible sin—attempted Deicide—became for us the source of every grace. What a triumph of Infinite Mercy !

Glance at the Heart of Jesus, opened after his death: by this He opened His arms to every soul, with the loving words: "I have loved thee unto death, and presented the last drop of My heart's blood for thee to draw thee from the abyss of destruction which thy sins prepared for thee in hell."

Oh, what a depth, and, at the same time, what a *height* of love! The work of Redemption as consummated by this love, made fast the gates of hell, and rescued us from that fiery pit; but not content with this, our loving Saviour would open the portals of a heaven more beautiful than the one which would have been our portion had Adam never sinned.

And now, as brothers of the Son of God, we may enter that region of bliss, and become as precious stones set in the celestial crown of the world of angels.

We may, by our zeal in the exercise of good works, and their union with the merits of Christ, ascend higher and higher, through new and more brilliant merits, to an immeasurable degree of glory.

Look at Mary, whose throne is next to that of Jesus: she was, like us, a child of man, and her glory by far outshines that of the brightest angel. We, as her children, may hope to attain a place in heaven, near that of our gracious Queen; for from the Heart of Jesus came forth the cry: "To him that shall overcome I will grant to sit with Me on My throne."

And how shall we learn the *breadth* of this love? I answer: By contemplating the generosity which marked its course, and so animated the Sacred Heart in the

breast of the Infant Saviour in the crib and of the Redeemer on the cross. Even now it beats for us in the Most Holy Sacrament over the whole globe. Think of the generosity of that love by which Jesus has communicated to us the whole merit of His life, passion, and death.

The words of St. Augustine refer to this in the explanation and answer given by him of the words of Christ: "What price could man give for his soul?" "Remember," exclaims St. Augustine, "the price which Christ paid for *you* through the work of Redemption; you have been purchased by the life, passion, and death of Christ the Son of God." What He gave for you He did not give even for the angels.

Oh, how sweetly are we reminded of all this by one loving glance at the Sacred Heart of Jesus! It beats indeed to-day on earth for each one of us.

Go before the tabernacle and ask what is that which Jesus confers upon you in every Holy Communion. It is *Himself*.

And the *length* of this enduring love may be discerned by the unwearied *forbearance* He shows to man.

From the first moment of your conception, Christian soul, He has loved you with an everlasting love. He has thought of you, and longed to bless you for all eternity. And it will be your own fault if He does not remain, until your very latest breath, the same faithful, loving Jesus, Who will assist you in that last dread passage where time is merged into eternity.

Yes, it is an article of faith that when the greatest sinner turns with a repentant heart to Jesus, even in his dying hour, he will still be saved through Him. And is this really so? Christian, look at the wounded Heart in the breast of your Redeemer. It has ceased to beat—it is dead! Yet from the wound came blood and water, the symbol of the Church to which Christ gave power to pardon the dying sinner whose heart cries out for mercy—for forgiveness through the merits of Christ.

Dearly beloved, who have listened to my words to-day, reflect upon what I have told you of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus—of the height, depth, breadth, and length of the love of Christ. Consider it daily, and the wish of St. Paul, of which I have already spoken to you, will certainly be fulfilled in you.

You will become so strengthened in the love of God, through the Spirit of Christ, that He will abide in your heart, and, finding therein so firm a faith, earnest a hope, and ardent a love, will there take up His abode forever.—Amen!

THIRD SERMON.

“Is thy heart right as my heart is with thy heart?”—4 Kings x, 15.

CENTURIES have passed since our Lord and Saviour, the loving Jesus, in His visible presence, walked the earth; and as the years roll on, He asks of every Catholic soul the same question which He put to the prince of the Apostles: “Lovest thou Me?” and every one should reply as did the ardent Peter: “Yes, Lord, I love Thee;” and yet the answer is not the same, for St. Peter not only assured the Lord of his love, but added: “Lord, Thou knowest all things, Thou knowest that I love Thee.”

If our divine Lord possessed not the power to read what is written in the inmost recesses of our hearts, He might be deceived by the assurance of a love which has no place therein, and indiscriminately bestow those rich treasures of grace which He loves so well to give, and which we require to work out our salvation in that state of life to which we have each one been assigned. But the Lord searcheth the heart of man, and knoweth if his lips speak truth. And too often, my dearest Christians, the lives, even of those who possess the gift of faith, so directly contradict their professions, that to them might be applied the words of Isaac: “The voice is the voice of Jacob, but the hands are those of Esau.”

The lips say: “I love my Jesus who died for me,” but as “actions speak louder far than words,” they

often proclaim the falsity of the assertion. We can not sufficiently appreciate the necessity of examining ourselves carefully on this point, and it were well to do so in presence of the Sacred Heart, as it beats in our midst, in the Most Holy Sacrament. What answer could we make to this question of our Lord? Could we truly say with St. Peter: "Lord, Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love Thee." Beloved in Christ, in this regard I will put into the mouth of our Saviour those words of Holy Scripture.

"Is thy heart right as my heart is with thy heart?" and after you have listened attentively to my words to-day, let each one make answer to his soul and his God.

O Mary, Mother of Jesus, who lovedst Him with the most sincere and maternal love, grant that we also may love Him with sincere and filial love!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, for the honor and glory of God!

The *first* mark of sincere love is the silent testimony of the *heart* itself, which is felt only by those who love. The little child, which never even heard the word *love*, feels it in the depths of its tender heart toward its mother, who lavishes upon it every fond endearment as it lovingly clings about her neck.

Question your own heart as to its feelings whenever you pronounce the sacred name of Jesus, or even think of Him.

St. Bernard sometimes, after he had uttered that

holy name, tasted a sweetness upon his lips as though he had eaten honey. Can you say, O Christian! that your feelings are like his? Is it with you, as St. Augustine declares of himself, that you find every thing, wherein the name of Jesus does not occur, insipid and without interest? You love Jesus, you say, but if His name leaves you insensible and cold, I am forced to doubt the sincerity of your love.

But as it is also true that mere feeling is very deceptive, therefore show, by your life, that you really speak the truth.

The *second* mark of sincere love is the care one takes not to grieve or *offend* the object of his love. Thus it may happen that a wife says to her husband: "Do you love me?" and what is his probable reply? "Silly question; would I have married you had I not?" But evening comes, and the charms of home are powerless to keep him there. So he goes to the tavern, where the midnight hour finds him still, yet he knows how much he will grieve his faithful wife by this evil course. Is she not perfectly right, therefore, if she says within herself: "Thy lips say I love thee; but thy life says it is a lie. Thy love is not sincere, or thou wouldst not be so ready to grieve my heart."

Christian, your Saviour asks: "Do you love Me?" How does your life answer this question of the Lord? With what care do you endeavor, not only not to commit a mortal sin, which would at once banish Christ from your heart; but to avoid committing even one deliberate venial sin which grieves and afflicts your Lord?

Do you watch over your conscience by the most assiduous practice of the particular examen? If so, then, indeed, you speak the truth. But if it would seem that you are careless in regard to the trifling sins and imperfections,—if you neglect the particular examen, you place yourself in the greatest danger of sinning, even grievously, and your lips would utter a lie: your love is only an illusion.

Even if you would read from your book the most ardent affections of love, while your lips say: “Yes, Lord Jesus, I love You;” your life cries out: “It is false.” But how is it, then, if you live with the guilt of mortal sin upon your soul? Ah! then, indeed, you deeply grieve your Saviour, and banish Him from your heart.

The third mark of sincere love is the desire to *please* the beloved, and to do with zeal what is required of us by the one whom we love. A well known proverb says that “love can read in the eyes of the beloved the desire of his heart.” The same is true of a sincere love towards Jesus. A wife needs not to ask her husband whether he loves her, although he is of a very undemonstrative nature,—never expressing his love,—if his actions show that he does, if he is quick to anticipate every wish of her heart; and fulfill it, if possible; therein lies the real test of love. The same is true of the sincerity of our love towards Jesus. What He requires of us is made known by His admonition: “Follow Me!—Be ye holy, as your Father in heaven is holy.” Ask your heart, with what zeal you

walk in the path of Christian perfection, whether it is your earnest wish to become holy.

And not only that, but what zeal do you manifest in assisting Jesus to extend His kingdom on earth, through zeal in the exercise of the spiritual and corporeal works of mercy? With what solicitude do you endeavor to prevent others from offending God, particularly those whom the Lord has confided to your care, watching that they fulfill their duties as faithful and zealous children of the Church?

Do you try earnestly to lead infidels and heretics to the way of salvation, and the knowledge of the true and only Church wherein salvation is to be found; and to support over the whole earth the kingdom of God, that zealous missionaries may be enabled to preach the gospel among the heathens? Can you say with truth that you are zealous in each of the above duties? If so, then you may indeed rejoice, for it is well with you; and your life replete with holy deeds shows that you sincerely love your God. But, on the contrary—and oh, with how many is not this the case!—if you are satisfied to live an ordinary Christian life, and, even this merely from the force of habit; if you do not at the very moment you awake from sleep, resolve to let your aim be to grow always better and better; to constantly multiply the good works you perform, to never lose an opportunity to save and sanctify others;—if, I repeat, beloved in Christ, it is thus with you, then your love for Jesus is far from being sincere.

And if you are content to be solicitous only for your immediate family or your own parish Church, as far as necessity requires; and even if you show yourself an active parish child, yet neglect every thing in regard to caring for the salvation of souls, as if it were a duty belonging only to priests, then the sincerity of your love towards Jesus is rather self-deception.

Whosoever loves Jesus sincerely provides for the salvation of souls, even though he be not a Paul nor a Priest, remembering the admonition of the disciple of love: "As He has shed His blood for us, so we should be ready to shed ours for each soul."

The *fourth* mark of sincere love is that magnanimity and *fidelity* which leads us to make sacrifices, even if we should have to suffer by assisting others.

Behold a married couple blessed with the goods of the world, with health and happiness, because prosperity has smiled upon their lives. You ask me whether they love one another, and to what degree? A question difficult to answer, while they continue to lead such a delightful life. On the contrary, suppose a youth and maiden to enter the married life with every prospect of health and happiness, and behold! after a few months, the hand of the Lord is laid heavily upon her, and He calls her to pass under His chastening rod. The wife becomes incurably ill, the husband loses his entire wealth, yet their love remains the same; yes, its flame burns even more brightly than before. Ah, yes! they love each other truly.

You say: "Yes, I love Jesus;" show it by your

love for the cross, by your *patience*, if the Lord imposes His chastening hand upon you. If then your affections of love multiply towards Jesus, and you esteem yourself happy that He has drawn you to Himself by the royal way of the cross, we know that you really have a sincere love towards Him.

And what in all this world so effectively conduces to this condition of sincere love, as one glance at the most Sacred Heart of Jesus and an assiduous cultivation of that beautiful devotion; for that Heart shed the last drop of blood for you on the cross, in sincere love. You have this Sacred Heart present in the Blessed Sacrament. Go then before the tabernacle, and think of Him who nourishes you so often with the Holy Sacrament, and gives it to you as food.

The better to illustrate this I will relate the following event: It happened that a ship was lost at sea, and those of the passengers who escaped the wreck were cast upon a desert island. Among them was a mother with a nursing infant. However, the joy of the passengers at their rescue was of brief duration, for they discovered that the soil was bleak and barren, and afforded no food whatever. And no vessel appeared to bear them away, the mother sat holding the starving child to her breast, from which it had drawn the very last drop of milk.

The mother had no nutriment, how could she nourish it? It drew with such force that it took from her veins the life blood, yet she uttered no word of complaint.

The mother becoming weaker and weaker, the passengers entreated her to let the child die, and, perhaps, her own life might be saved. But she was deaf to their prayers, and still allowed the babe to drink her blood; yes, to the very last moment of her life, which was indeed at hand, for her head drooped upon that faithful breast; and when the prayers of wrecked passengers, that they might be rescued, were heard and a vessel came in sight, she was dead. The child lived and grew to man's estate, and when the youth heard what his mother had done for him, and how she had nourished him with her blood, the heroic act filled his heart with such ardent love for her, that from the very depths of his yearning heart he often cried: "O mother! mother! could I but once behold you, if even for one moment, only to thank you for your devoted maternal love. Oh, how happy would I not feel!"

Christians, what that mother did, the Sacred Heart of Jesus is doing daily in the Most Holy Sacrament, and has done it for nineteen hundred years, by nourishing us with His precious blood. As children of God, as members of the Church, we can thank Him for it personally. Oh, then, make good use of His Presence on your altars, particularly by frequent and worthy Communions.

No doubt that will enkindle and nourish in your hearts the fire of divine love, as nothing else could in the world; and you will find your dearest joy in cherishing a sincere, ardent, and faithful love towards the Sacred Heart of Jesus.—Amen!

FEAST OF ST. PETER AND ST. PAUL.

FIRST SERMON.

“Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church.”—Matt. xvi, 18.

THE Church has set apart this day as the Feast of St. Peter, while to-morrow she assigns for that of his faithful coadjutor, St. Paul. But as these two great champions of the truth were so intimately associated in their mission, proclaiming together to the Romans the divine word, which would lead them to life eternal, and disseminating, with the most happy results, our holy religion in the principal city of the world, the Church, to perpetuate their glorious memory together in the hearts of the faithful, upon the feast of one or the other, observes the commemoration of both. Their combined efforts in behalf of the Church were productive of such luminous effects that St. Paul himself gives testimony thereto, when writing to the Romans, in the following words: “Your faith is spoken of in the whole world.” As SS. Peter and Paul, moreover, on the very same day, and for the very same faith, gave up their lives, and received in heaven the martyr’s crown, it is fitting, indeed, that hymns of

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praise should, throughout the Catholic world, ascend on high in honor of both.

Let us to-day, in honor of St. Peter, consider: how all that renders the Church so majestic and glorious by her marks, is due to the privileges given by Christ to the Pope—His Vicar on earth.

O Mary, Queen of Apostles. whose maternal blessing rejoiced the heart of St. Peter when, for the first time, on Pentecost, he preached the word of God, obtain for us the grace to honor the prince of the Apostles in his successor!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, for the greater honor and glory of God!

During the solemn ceremonies attendant upon the coronation of a newly-elected Pontiff, the cardinal deacon, second in rank, approaching the Vicar of Christ, addresses him thus: "Know that the Lord has made of thee the ruler of the universe, and that thou art His earthly representative. To Christ the Lord be everlasting praise and glory."

This admonition to the newly-elected Head of the Church is full of the deepest meaning, not only to him, but to us; for it serves to remind his faithful children to render to him the honor, love, and obedience which belong to him as head of the Church, and to pay the tribute with a willing heart.

That we may, at one glance, conceive a just idea of the glory which surrounds the pontificate of the

successor of St. Peter, and realize its dignity in its entire grandeur, we need but look at the kingdom of God on earth, the Church, and consider how all that so wonderfully exalts it emanates from its venerable head.

Who can behold this ancient and impregnable city of God, so distinguished and glorified through those four towers of strength, her marks, and refrain from admiration and love! The Church is *one*; she is *holy*; she is *Catholic*; she is *apostolic*; she is, moreover, *infallible* and *indestructible*, and the Vicar of Christ *watches over it all*.

The Church is *one*! Look around the world, and behold the thousands and hundreds of thousands of men upon whose religious dissensions and wranglings the sun never sets. Division of opinion, factions and revolutions, new sects spring up every day on the ruins of the old. Throughout all disunion arises, save in the Church of God alone. She knows no compromise between truth and error. All those who do not confess what she teaches, or refuse her the submission of their will and judgment, must go forth from her fold. And for the maintenance of this wonderful union she is principally indebted to the Pope.

The earliest of the fathers of the Church have most emphatically asserted this. "It can not be denied," writes Optatus of Milevi, "that to St. Peter Rome is indebted for the establishment of the first dogmatical chair, that over the whole Church unity might be preserved."

Remove from the Church of God the venerable ruler who wields the scepter of her spiritual desti-

nies; take from her that shepherd who for so many centuries has guarded the flock of Christ, and unity would prevail no more.

The Sovereign Pontiff is the center of unity, the center toward which every thing in the spiritual creation of the Church must ever tend—the sun—to which the children of the Church must look *for* solace, light and warmth, derived by him from the Sacred Heart of Christ.

The Church, as we learn from her divine Founder, is built upon *one* rock, not upon *two*; and this rock which procures for her individuality and unity is Peter, and in him, his successor, the Pope.

The Church is *holy*. This characteristic of the Church casts a halo of light about her. She is the glorious Mother of all who have lived upon earth in the practice of virtues so exalted that the Lord of heaven and earth has attested and glorified them by numberless most astonishing miracles. And what is it that enables the saints of God to rise so far above this poor weak nature of ours and become what they are to-day? It was a participation in all those means of sanctification which Christ has communicated to this Church.

But the Pope is the source from which emanates every act of ecclesiastical jurisdiction. Besides, there is no other state or calling in life which, in proportion to its numbers, can bring forward such a glorious array of saints, whom the Church has placed upon her altars for the veneration of the faithful. Among the two hun-

dred and fifty-seven of the successors of St. Peter eighty Saints are placed on the altars. It is true that there were many sainted bishops ; there have been Princes, Kings, and Emperors,—men of almost every state and rank,—whom we venerate as canonized saints ; but, in proportion, they are by far not so numerous as the saints who once graced St. Peter's chair.

There is, therefore, a deep moral motive in the universal feeling of veneration which has impelled the faithful to bestow upon the Sovereign Pontiff a title which not even those of a different creed refused to him—the title of "*Holy Father*." It is he to whom belong the words of Christ to St. Peter, whose successor he is: "*I give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven ;*" and who, consequently, has the power to open that celestial realm for all who deserve admission, and to enroll on earth among the saints all who, by their holy lives, merit that glorious honor.

Even this is not the limit of his power, for he can open to those departed suffering souls so dear to God the treasure of the graces of the Church ; and, that they may be the more speedily released from the purifying fire of purgatory, he mercifully applies to them, for their perfect purification, the merits of Christ our Saviour, by granting a plenary indulgence. Then, nothing can detain them from entering the celestial portals, and pouring forth their love and gratitude before the throne of God. What a high and holy privilege ! what a sublime dignity has Christ conferred upon the Pope !

The Church is *Catholic* or universal; and to whom is she indebted for this? To the successor of St. Peter, for it is through him that she retains her unity, without which men of every land, although indeed a multitude, would be utterly unable to form such an ecclesiastical organization.

She is the *Church of nations*, because more than two hundred millions of men, of every clime and every tongue, look up to him who rules this Church and lovingly call him "Father."

St. Bernard pays a fitting tribute to the papal dignity in the following energetic words, which he directed to Pope Eugene III., whom the voice of God, guiding the choice of the Church, summoned from the cloistered walls of Clugny to wield the scepter of the Church. St. Bernard, his former superior and spiritual father, addressed him in the following words: "Who art thou? The Prince of Bishops and Apostles; in the primacy, Abel; in the government, Noe; in the patriarchate, Abraham; in the priestly character, Melchisedec; in thy dignity, Aaron; in thy power, Peter; in thy unction, Christ!"

Most justly, therefore, did the great St. Cyprian, more than sixteen centuries ago, pen the following words: "To be in communion with the Pope means to be in communion with the whole Catholic world."

Take the sovereign Pontiff from the Church therefore, and she will cease to be Catholic.

The Church is *apostolic*. She knows and will recognize no other Founder than Christ, Who commis-

sioned His Apostles to propagate her faith over all the earth, and it is her Head who secures to her the mark of apostolicity, for the pontifical succession has reached from the time of the Apostles—from Peter, Linus, Clement—uninterrupted and unbroken, until the present day.

The "*Confessio*," as it is called—the spot at Rome where St. Peter was martyred; the spot which was enriched by his blood—is the trunk of that mighty and magnificent tree from which sprang other churches in every part of the world; so that St. Augustine might well exclaim: "The Chain which rivets me to the Catholic Church is the unbroken succession of that glorious line of pontiffs who have filled St. Peter's chair. Behold all those who have succeeded each other there! Oh, this is, indeed, the rock upon which the Church is built, against which the gates of hell can never prevail!"

The Church is *infallible*. What a distinction for her! The kingdom of truth upon earth—a world full of doubt, contradiction, and lies! And through whom is she infallible? St. Thomas of Aquin, the greatest of all theologians, will answer: "It is because her Head is infallible; because he has been endowed with that power ever since Christ said to St. Peter: 'Satan has desired to have you to sift you as wheat, but I have prayed for thee Peter, that thy faith fail not; and thou being once converted, confirm thy brethren,' and ever since the earliest ages of Christianity the popes have faithfully done this."

The Church is *indestructible*. What a glorious privilege is this in a world where every thing else yields to the withering touch of time! It is the indestructible nature of the rock upon which she is built which secures for her this enviable attribute. It is St. Peter in the reigning Pontiff, whoever he may be, who, inspired by Christ, secures this indestructibility to the Catholic Church, as the history of every age has shown.

Not only was she tossed about on the waves of disputed dogma, but for three hundred weary years the bloody sword of persecution was drawn, and the blood of many martyrs became the seed of the infant Church. Twenty-eight Popes gave up their lives for the faith; and, by their example, "confirmed their brethren" in the faith until Pope Sylvester planted the cross upon the crown of Constantine the Great.

Then came the migration of nations. Rome, with the West, is forsaken, and left without protection from the emperors. But, behold! the Popes, in the might of their power, checked the incoming tide of barbarians, converted the Asiatic hordes to our holy faith, and laid the foundation of the civilization of to-day.

The Musselman's creed, making such rapid advances, threatened to blot out Christianity, could such a thing have been possible; but there were the Popes, who encouraged the Crusades, and crushed the encroachment. At home, despotism enslaved even nations professing Christianity; but the Popes broke the arrogant spirit of royalty, and secured the freedom of the people.

But, with the advance of time, all this was forgotten;

nations were misled by fanatical demagogues, while pseudo-philosophers and revolutionists destroyed the basis of human society, and trampled upon the interests of mankind. But Popes, as were Pius VI. and VII., pronounced the anathema against this corruption, while the wicked raged at the check thus put on their schemes, and chafed in their ire, but in vain!

And, in our day, we know how a false and inflated knowledge seeks to sully the purity of faith. We behold how "modern progress," in this nineteenth century, and its boasted civilization, glories in trampling upon the liberties of the Church, and points at her the finger of scorn. But Pope Pius IX. confronted this arrogance, and by his ecclesiastical censures crushed down its assaults.

Do not think that the Church, or her venerable Pontiffs, would ever raise their voice, or exert their power, against the blessings of *real* progress, for, *that* they have ever encouraged. She has been its mother, and she has ever ranked first in assisting to promote its advance. But, at the same time, through her Pontiffs, she has ever condemned those who abused it for the promotion of their own vile ends,—to enslave religious freedom, and destroy the purity of faith,—with a courage and firmness which equalled that of the martyrs of old.

It is an honor, indeed, for a mortal to be ranked among those who have been chosen to be the successors of Peter, the Head of the Church of God, the Vicar of Christ, and to enjoy the greatest dignity ever

conferred upon man by God. Leo XIII. fully realizes the greatness of this honor, and gloriously guards the interests of the Church. But let the faithful children of the Church be also encouraged to stand up boldly for the rights of the Pontifical Chair; and, through their veneration, attachment, and fidelity to the Pope, show themselves to be devoted and worthy children of the Holy Catholic Church.—Amen!

SECOND SERMON.

“Simon, I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not ; and thou, being once converted, confirm thy brethren.”—Luke xxii, 32.

HOLY SCRIPTURE tells us that, ere yet our first parents had forfeited their right to dwell amid the varied charms of Eden, while their still pure and innocent souls enabled them to revel in its delights without a thought of care, God created in them the spirit of knowledge and filled them with wisdom. Unfortunately, they listened to the seductive voice of the tempter, yielded to sin, and, in consequence, both they and their posterity were deprived of those gifts in their perfection. To atone for this deficiency, therefore, man is bound to acquire such knowledge as will enable him not only to provide for his temporal necessities, but also to learn the truths of revelation, that he may walk in the way of salvation, fulfill the will of God, and one day receive an eternal reward.

This granted, my dear brethren, it becomes evident at once that Catholics should be so thoroughly instructed in their holy faith as to be able to defend or explain it when called upon.

At the time when the early dawn of Christianity first beamed upon a world so long groping in the darkness of error, the first Christians knew every point of faith, and could impart that knowledge, too, to those who were longing to seek refuge in the fold of Christ ; but, alas ! it is no longer so.

Look, for example, at that article of faith which has been recently defined to be a dogma—much to the joy of all devoted Catholics—but amid such a storm of opposition from the side of unbelievers, and even of some Catholics themselves. And but few Catholics comprehend it even now so fully as to explain or defend it to those who treat it with scorn.

I allude to the dogma of the Infallibility of the Pope, of which, in my sermon to-day, I will present to you the proofs.

O Mary, most perfect model of a living faith, who, as we are taught by the Church, didst so often crush the heresies in their very birth, pray to thy divine Son that we may never desert that holy faith!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, for the greater honor and glory of God!

If, beloved in the Lord Jesus, it is so essentially necessary, especially in our own day, for the Catholic Christian to be in general well instructed in all matters of faith, a thorough knowledge of those truths which have been more recently defined as necessary to be believed, is of the utmost importance. Scarcely any other article of faith has been so disfigured and distorted as the dogma of the Infallibility of the Pope; and, being but imperfectly understood by Catholics themselves, defection from faith sometimes was the result. Witness the sect of “Old Catholics” in Ger-

many, which numbers in its ranks some of the most renowned professors and learned savants of that land. Therefore, parents, I entreat you, if you love the souls of your children, listen to my words to-day.

Let your children not suffer shipwreck in their faith, and therefore instruct them most carefully as to the meaning of the assertion, "The Pope is infallible."

The time will soon come for your child to leave his home and choose a career in life. He will possibly meet with companions of a different faith. He will be questioned as to whether he, as a Catholic, believes in the Trinity, the Real Presence, and sacramental confession. He will, no doubt, answer in the affirmative. But now his Protestant or infidel friend may ask: "Tell me if you also believe that a mere man is infallible." "*A man infallible?* I don't believe that he is infallible." "But," continues the Protestant, "your Church and her ministers insist upon the infallibility of the Pope, which blasphemous assertion is nothing else than investing a man with the attributes of God." How can your child reply as he should unless, before his departure from the paternal roof, you were careful to have him well instructed in his religion, especially in regard to this pontifical attribute?

Parents! the responsibility is yours; therefore listen with a particular attention to that which I shall say on this subject to-day, that you may conceive a proper idea of so important a matter, and impart to your children a knowledge sufficient to answer satisfactorily the enemies of our faith.

First, I answer to the question, What do we mean by saying that the Pope is infallible?

Secondly, How can we prove that he is infallible?

Thirdly, How can we reply to the questions or objections most generally brought forward against it?

First, What does it mean that the Pope is infallible? I answer: It does not mean that the Pope is infallible when he merely *converses, preaches, or writes* upon faith. It does not mean that he can not err in matters of a purely worldly nature or in questions of science; neither are we to understand that in political affairs he can make no mistake. Above all, it does not mean that he is *impeccable*; that is, exempt from the commission of sin. What, then, does it mean? By saying that Christ's Vicar on earth is infallible, we mean that he, as *the successor of St. Peter and representative of Christ on earth*, can not err in matters of *faith* when he, as *Head of the Church*, pronounces to the whole Church a decision of faith upon some disputed point.

For instance, as to whether a certain something is a revealed truth or not, or whether it stands in immediate relation to some revealed truth. *Here*, my brethren, the Pope is infallible; *and even here* it is not from any intrinsic merit of his own, but through the Lord Jesus Christ, Who, ever watchful of the interests of His Holy Church, bestowed upon him this gift.

Now, how can the prerogative of Infallibility be *proved*? How can we convince those who do not believe it that it is not a mere assumption of authority on the part of the Sovereign Pontiffs?

There are three passages in which our divine Lord Himself assures us of it; *first*, when He spoke of establishing His Church, and addressed to the venerable chief of the apostles those memorable words: "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of hell shall never prevail against her."

Age after age has rolled away, and yet she has stood firm and immovable, undaunted by the malice of her foes, and all because the faith which she teaches is *truth itself*. If, then, according to the words of Christ Himself, St. Peter is the firmly established foundation of the Church, then the faith he teaches must be without a blemish; for let the foundation totter, and the structure which it supports must fall—a ruined pile!

Again, we read in Holy Writ (Luke xxii, 32) that when, upon one occasion, our Lord referred to the diabolical malice of Satan, who exerted himself to the utmost to destroy the infant Church, He exclaimed: "Simon, I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not; and thou, being once converted, confirm thy brethren." And can we doubt, for one little moment, beloved in Christ, that a prayer offered up by the Son of God made man would fail to achieve its end; and that at that very moment the power of infallibly deciding in matters of faith was imparted to St. Peter and his Successors, in order that the Church might be confirmed in faith and the salvation of her children secured?

Lastly, Christ thus addressed Peter, after His resur-

rection and before ascending to heaven: "Feed My lambs; feed My sheep." These words, dear brethren, inculcate obedience in all matters of faith, on the part of the faithful—the bishops as well as the laity; the sheep as well as the lambs—to the successor of St. Peter, the sovereign Pontiff. For the word of God—the right and full instruction in matters of faith—is the pasture which sustains the spiritual life of the flock of Christ, Who, therefore, deemed it necessary to secure the prerogative of Infallibility to St. Peter and the long line of popes, who have succeeded, and will continue to succeed, him until the end of time, that they might never lead the souls, whose salvation He had purchased at so dear a rate, to graze in poisoned meadows.

The existence of this power attached to the dignity of the Pope, which Christ so decidedly and gloriously has enunciated in the three preceding passages of Holy Writ, has always been acknowledged and recognized by the Church, from the time of the Apostles until the present day, as a prerogative which the successors of St. Peter have always both exercised and required to be obeyed.

In proof of this we need only take into consideration the opinions of the *holy fathers*, from the Apostles to St. Bernard, who all confess with St. Jerome: "I swerve not from that which the Head of the Holy Roman Church commands to be believed; for upon the teaching of the chair of St. Peter the Church is confirmed in faith." The holy fathers all cry out, and con-

fess with St. Augustine: "No more discussion, Rome has spoken!"

This privilege of St. Peter in his successors, the popes, has been acknowledged also by all the *Ecumenical Councils* or assemblies of the Church—fathers in the East and the West, from the first to the last. Unanimously they cry out with the fathers of the Council of Chalcedon: "Leo speaks. St. Peter speaks through him. We believe with Leo;" and they all confess with those of the Sixth General Council: "It seems but paper and ink, but, through Agatho, Peter has spoken; Peter lives among us in his successors as Head of the Roman Church."

This infallible right of decision has also ever been, and is still, acknowledged by the mightiest intellects of every age. Men of the greatest learning and renown, as doctors in the Church, have always been ready to agree with St. Thomas of Aquin, the most celebrated of all theologians. He says: "The Church is infallible, for her head is infallible, according to the promise of Christ: Simon, I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not."

Acting then upon this infallible right the Sovereign *Pontiffs* themselves have throughout all ages, and in the face of the whole ecclesiastical world exercised this privilege, from the earliest days of Christianity until now. All heresies were judged by the Pope as Head of the Church within or without the councils, and, therefore, to say that history can show nothing of this privilege, and that the definition of the "*Infallibility*

of the Pope," as a dogma, was a mere scheme of Pius IX. and the bishops of the Vatican Council, is simply absurd.

So far from this, there is no other article of faith to which Church history so frequently points as this, so amply has Christ provided for the faith of the Church for all time.

Finally, beloved in Christ, when you speak upon this subject with Protestants, especially Americans, remind them that in every state there is a supreme court from whose decisions there can be no appeal; otherwise disputes would never cease, and all government would be at an end. In Washington, for example, there is the Chief Justice, to whose decision all must yield. Beloved in Christ, what this chief justice is for the national government, the Sovereign Pontiff is for the Church; the difference only consisting in this: that neither the United States nor any other government does claim to be a kingdom of truth. But the Church assures us that she is the kingdom of truth, and her divine Founder tells us that he is the King of truth. It may be advisable to sacrifice one's rights for the public welfare; but no one who has the consciousness of a rational being will willingly palm off error for truth. Consequently, all unprejudiced thinking men over the entire world, if they only give the subject sufficient consideration, must know and confess that when the Church declares herself infallible, her Head, in pronouncing upon questions of faith, must be so too. If this were not the case there would

be an interminable chain of doubts, dissensions, and disputes.

But some may ask: Why then did the Gallicans so strenuously oppose this dogma, and reject it even after its definition was announced to the world?

That they did indeed do so is a lamentable fact; but the motives which guided their conduct, especially in England and France, was to flatter those sovereigns who aspired not only to govern the state, but the Church in the state as well.

In Germany also the promulgation of Papal Infallibility, as an article of faith, elicited a storm of opposition from certain learned theologians, who disdained to submit their understanding to the decision of the Church; but this opposition, my brethren, had its origin in a spirit of pride which rebelled for not having been invited to the Vatican Council.

More than thirty years have elapsed since I lived in Europe, and read the writings of him who has since become the principal actor in the recent heretical and scandalous movement in Germany, and I predicted even then, that he would become a heresiarch, that is, the founder of a new heretical sect. 'Every line of what proceeded from his pen bore upon it the impress of pride, insincerity, and willful blindness.

But God be forever praised, beloved in Christ, that the bishops of our Holy Church remained faithful to their calling! Not one joined the ranks of that heretical body, although some priests were so false as to do so, and even so guilty as to forget their vows, and

marry. And that reveals plainly that in their hearts they had long ago wished to give up their allegiance to the Church; and pride is never slow in opening wide the portals through which carnal desire may come. But heed what I say, my brethren, the day is close at hand which will witness the dying struggles of that sect.

Let us then give eternal praise and thanks to God, Whose divine will it was that this dogma should be solemnly proclaimed before the end of time, and Who so blesses His Church that never has she felt interiorly so immutable, firm, and secure. This definition has secured for her perfect immunity against all possible storms from without and within, no matter how fiercely they rage in matters of faith. At whatever emergency, all eyes will then be only directed with infallible assurance to the decision of the Sovereign Pontiff.

Even if the successor of St. Peter should be forcibly deprived of the Vatican, and banished from his home in the Eternal City, no matter if he withdraw to the uttermost limits of the earth, never more to behold the gold and crimson of the setting sun tinge with a glorious radiance the seven hills of Rome, still we may exclaim with St. Ambrose: "Where Peter is, there is the Church,—there is the One upon whom Christ bestowed the keys of the kingdom of heaven. St. Peter lives in his successor—the Pope! There is the certainty of faith, the way of salvation!"—Amen!

THIRD SERMON.

“Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against her.”—Matt. xvi, 18.

EIGHTEEN hundred years and more have rolled away since the divine Founder of our Holy Church uttered these consoling words to the prince of the Apostles, when He invested him with the power of the keys; and, of all those years, we can scarcely point to one wherein the storms of persecution have not raged so wildly and fiercely, in one or another portion of His spiritual domain, that, at times, the enemies of religion rejoiced in the hope that the hour of their triumph was at hand!

But, firm and unshaken in her power and might—pure, holy, immaculate—the Church still stands forth, the kingdom of God on earth. She combats and conquers; and will at last celebrate, with Christ in heaven, the never-ending triumph of victory.

But of what avail would it be for you, my dearly beloved, if the Immaculate Bride of Christ rise far above the malice of her foes, and you yourselves, though you be Catholics, were to go to perdition?

“You are temples of God,” says the Apostle; and Christ, the Incarnate Son of God, Himself assures us that the kingdom of God is within us. This kingdom is also exposed to the assaults of temptation, and the artful attacks of the enemy of our souls, whose de-

moniac joy it is to win us from our allegiance to this heavenly realm.

Therefore, our lives must be one constant struggle, which can only end with life; for, as children of the militant Church, we must valiantly fight, if we wish to participate in her grand celestial triumph.

Full well did the great St. Augustine comprehend this truth when he said: "I beheld men falling, who once stood as pillars in the Church." Beloved in Christ, what a motive to incite us to try, by every means in our power, to strengthen this kingdom of God in our hearts, and how important is not the question: What must we do to preserve this kingdom within us? How shall we remain faithful to the standard of Christ? I answer, and say:

The very promises made by the Saviour to Peter, the rock upon which He would build His Church, are those which, applied to ourselves, are the guarantees of our perseverance.

O Mary, Protectress of the Church, thou valiant woman, who stoodst beneath the cross with bleeding heart, yet crushing down thy grief, obtain for us strength and fidelity to combat and conquer as victorious soldiers of thy Son!

I speak in the holy name of Jesus, for the greater honor and glory of God!

"Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail

against her." Such was the glorious assurance which the Saviour gave to St. Peter, when the latter, in the name of all the Apostles, made that sublime confession of faith in Him as Christ, the Son of God made man. And again: "Peter, I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not, and thou, being once converted, confirm thy brethren."

From these promises we learn the first and principal condition upon which depends the firm establishment of the kingdom of God in our hearts, and that is, *faith*. Because it is faith which so gloriously illumines our path to eternity that, with its brilliant light flashing into the inmost recesses of our soul, we can not fail to realize the importance of the great affair of our salvation.

How could it be otherwise than that faith, with all its promises, should inspire us to valiantly combat temptation, walk firmly in the pathway of right, and obtain that eternal reward?

It is faith which teaches us, not only to avoid the bad, but to perform the good; urges us on in our striving after perfection, and enables us to reach the goal at last.

Faith warns us against the many dangers which constantly threaten the Christian; and opens our spiritual hearing to the terrible warnings which are sent us in mercy and love—warnings of the punishments which will come upon us if we prove false to our God.

It is faith which whispers so sweetly of that heaven which may be ours, the glories and joys of which the heart of man hath not conceived.

Faith teaches us, also, that God was pleased to create rational beings; to endow them with free will; to place them on earth in a state of probation and trial, and that all those who emerge victoriously from the ordeal will, through His beatific vision, and an essential union with Him, become forever blessed, *and be even like unto Him.*

But faith also points out the dangers of salvation. It teaches that many of the human race have failed to stand the test of freedom; that, even of the bright angelic host, a third part succumbed to the violence of their evil desires, and were hurled into the abyss of fire enkindled by the breath of an angry God.

Then was inaugurated the conflict between the kingdom of God and the dominion of Satan; between the kingdom of virtue and the kingdom of evil. Then stood arrayed against each other the kingdom of light and the powers of darkness in a contest which will end but with time.

Then our first parents, forgetful of that God Who had placed them in a terrestrial paradise—a garden of delights—listened to the tempter who, envying their happiness, sought to drag them to perdition, and urged them to rebel against their Maker. It was fitting, indeed, and most worthy of the Divine Goodness, that the Redemption of man was effected; but, in regard to his individual temptations he should combat, be faithful to God and His kingdom, and “bear it away.”

Well is it for that Christian who never loses sight of faith amid the cares and turmoil of the world,—

who, illuminated by its light, thinks often upon its promises, its warnings, its threatenings, in their whole eternal greatness,—combats valiantly against temptation, and is firmly determined, not only not to risk his salvation by sinning mortally, but to aspire even after perfection, and to continually increase his merits for heaven.

Faith points, moreover, to those means which the bounty of a loving Saviour has placed within our reach that we may serve Him with unswerving fidelity. Then, O child of the Holy Catholic Church! cling firmly to the *rock* upon which that Church is built; for there, indeed, the light of faith shines with such splendor that, when hidden foes would assault the soul, we are warned at once. Live in that light, and the kingdom of God will forever remain firm in your heart.

Christ, secondly, promised to St. Peter the *keys* of the kingdom of heaven; and, through the prince of the Apostles, our Lord makes similar promises to us. What, then, for us, beloved in Christ, are those keys which possess such wonderful power? I answer: Those *prayers* which we offer up in the most holy name of Jesus. "Whatsoever you ask the Father in My name, He will give unto you," so Jesus Himself assures us. How, then, can we hesitate to ask for graces when, as it were, we become almighty through this promise?

St. Teresa has declared that she does not fear for a soul devoted to prayer. The prayerful soul possesses,

through that very love of prayer, the key to heaven, thus being able to procure always new graces for her sanctification. It was prayer which transformed so many holy souls into saints of God. St. Augustine justly says: "He that prays rightly, lives rightly;" consequently, those who pray like the saints will live like them.

Yes, beloved in the Lord Jesus, whoever prays "in spirit and in truth," and according to the divine admonition, *prays always*,—that is, keeps himself ever in the presence of God,—will, according to the promise made to Abraham the father of the faithful, become perfect. "Walk before Me, and you will become perfect," said the Lord.

"Feed My sheep." The pasture to which the Spiritual Shepherd leads His flock are those green and pleasant meadows of revealed truth watered by limpid streams and sparkling fountains of grace.

But another pasture is also contained in the divine admonition, namely, the manner and form in which the Church celebrates her feasts throughout the ecclesiastical year; her maternal heart thus reminding us of our calling as children of God, and of all He has done for our salvation. To this spiritual pasture belongs, also, the hearing of the divine word, the many attractive devotions she cherishes, and the frequent reception of the Holy Sacraments.

Above all, beloved in the Lord Jesus, remember Him Who remains in the little tabernacle, often alone and forgotten, although His delight is to be with the

children of men. Make good use of the real presence of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament—Christ, Who offers Himself daily, yes, hourly, on our altars, and gives Himself a celestial banquet for our souls.

Ah, yes, the presence of Christ among us is indeed a very pasture of delight and spiritual repast! Visit Him then often, and remember that He is the same Jesus Who once offered Himself for each one of us upon the cross, as He now offers Himself for us daily in the Mass, and that not once, but numberless times.

Oh, what a treasure is Holy Mass to those whose hearts are penetrated with a true and living faith! When the Sacred Host is held on high in the hands of the minister of God, we may indeed exclaim with more than the confidence of holy David: "Behold herein the face of Christ Thy Son." But what shall I say of Holy Communion? What strength do we not derive from a pasture which affords us as food the flesh and blood of Christ, Who deigns to mingle them with ours, Who condescends so far as to come with body and soul, divinity and humanity, into our poor, weak hearts. "He that eateth this bread will live for Me—will live forever;" and again: "He that eateth this bread abideth in Me, and I in him." Blessed assurance from the divine lips of Him Who will one day come to judge the living and the dead!

Yes, brethren in Christ, that the promises of Christ to St. Peter may one day be verified in us, and that the kingdom of God may take deep root in our hearts, we must entertain an absolute and unqualified sub-

mission to the teaching of the Church in matters of faith, and to the teaching of the Infallible Head of the Church, the Pope. We must cultivate a spirit of prayer, be zealous in receiving the Sacraments. We must assist devoutly at Mass as often as we can, not on Sundays only, but even when the Church does not oblige us to go, and should also, by visits, adore Him in the Most Holy Sacrament, and receive Him often through Holy Communion.

If it be thus with you, beloved in Christ, you may indeed thank God for enabling you to be thus faithful to the graces He gives,—you may thank Him from the very depths of a grateful and loving heart; for His divine kingdom is firmly established within you, and the gates of hell can work no ruin therein.—Amen!

FEAST OF THE SCAPULAR.

FIRST SERMON.

“I am the mother of knowledge.”—Eccl. xxiv, 24.

LIFE is a warfare, and none should be more sensible of this truth than the children of that holy and venerable Church whose character on earth is militant. Well did St. Paul realize our state; and, therefore, in his Second Epistle to Timothy, he admonished this disciple that he who striveth for the mastery is not crowned except he strive lawfully. That all the members of our ancient faith do not strive after this manner is, alas, but too certain; and who can say, dearly beloved in Christ Jesus, that the greater number ever at all begin this conflict with the world, the flesh and devil? And yet, as salvation for a long and endless eternity depends upon this combat and this victory, each zealous child of the Church should avail himself of every means within his reach to render the issue as certain as possible; for what is more just than that a combatant choose the keenest weapons for the fray, and protect himself with the strongest armor?

A child of the Church should, therefore, obey the loving call of that tender mother when she most

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earnestly entreats him to fly for refuge to Mary the Mother of God. That she does so is evident from the fact that in almost every instance the "Hail Mary" immediately follows the "Our Father." The very words, which are thus placed on our lips, manifest the confidence reposed by the Church in the ever-blessed Virgin. From this powerful protectress her children may expect assistance in all dangers of soul and body, for she teaches them to say: "Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death."

There are innumerable other prayers which she says in the name of her children, and each one indicates her confidence in the patronage of Mary. There are also two special devotions through which she calls upon her children to take refuge with Mary, namely, the devotion of the *Rosary* and of the *Scapular*.

It is the latter which to-day claims our attention, and I say to you: Children of Mary, be invested with the Scapular of Mount Carmel, and, moreover, wear it in the spirit of God; wear it as becomes worthy children of her who calls herself: "The Mother of knowledge."

How does she deserve this title? I shall to-day endeavor to establish her claims.

O Mary, Protectress of the Church of God and her children, above all strengthen in our hearts the virtue of holy faith, that it may be and remain for us all a *shield* in that combat which will only end at death!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus for the greater glory of God.

“The just man lives by faith,” as St. Paul assures us. How important, therefore, must it be to let this virtue take deep root in our hearts, that it may have a vigorous growth and bear abundant fruit; how anxious ought we to be that these fruits obtain their full maturity for the nourishment and refreshment of our souls.

The same Apostle also calls faith a *shield*. The life of the just man upon earth is, as we have already heard, a combat, and only he who lawfully strives will receive the crown of victory. As proof of this read the eleventh chapter of St. Paul’s Epistle to the Hebrews. Beginning with Abel the just, he points to the combat and victory of the patriarchs and all the just of the preceding ages, to Gedeon, Sampson, Jephte, David, Samuel, and the prophets, and concludes with the words: “Who by faith subdued kingdoms, wrought justice, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, put to flight the armies of foreigners. . . . They were stoned, they were cut asunder, they were tempted. . . . And all these being approved by the testimony of faith. . . .”

The same and much more St. Paul could have asserted of the faithful under the New Law. What should we learn from this? That, as the same Apostle ex-

horts us, following "this cloud of witnesses," we should run to the fight proposed unto us, "looking on Jesus, the Author and Finisher of faith," which must illumine and strengthen the valiant contenders for the kingdom of God. To combat victoriously it is necessary to have an accurate knowledge of the battle-field, to know beforehand the number of the opposing forces, and to be acquainted with the manner of their attack. All this we see by the light of faith.

St. Paul says: "Looking on Jesus, the Author and Finisher of faith;" I say to-day: Looking at Mary, upon whom Christ Himself bestows the epithet "blessed" on account of her faith. And why? I answer: Because Mary, as Mother of the Author of our holy faith, with all its truths, gifts, advantages, and promises, is intimately and inseparably united with Him.

St. Paul calls faith, first, a shield in the conflict against the world, the flesh, and the devil. In olden times, the shield covered the warriors from head to foot. When will faith be to us such a protection in the combat for our salvation? When we not only confess the faith with our lips and in some of our actions, but are thoroughly instructed in matters of faith and able to furnish a correct explanation of what we believe. What a reliable shield in the conflict against temptation will our faith be to us if it be as firm and unhesitating as Mary's!

"Blessed art thou who hast believed." These were

the words which the holy and venerable Elizabeth addressed to the young and tender Virgin, and in the same manner the entire Church calls out to her, saluting her as the seat of divine wisdom, as the tower of David, as the one who put to flight all heresies and enemies of holy faith.

The whole life of the blessed Mother is a resplendent picture of active faith. All that she is before God and in the kingdom of God, she is simply and only in virtue of the truths, the gifts, the means, and promises of holy faith.

How important is it, therefore, that we, in the conflict against temptations, look on her, and think of what holy faith teaches us in regard to our existence, our eternal destiny, our Redemption through Christ, and our call to the Church! How essential is it that we reflect upon and make use of the means of salvation, which she distributes to us, and obey the call to dwell forever in the kingdom of the blessed, with which, through the grace of God, we have been favored.

Give me a Christian who is so entirely penetrated with the spirit of faith, that his thoughts run constantly thus:

“I am an image of God; my destination is not this world, but eternity. I have no other problem to solve than the fulfillment of the holy will of God; and all that I do in this regard is meritorious for eternal life, for heaven, where, in communion with the angels and

· saints, united with God, I shall be and abide eternally."

All the privileges which holy faith secures for us shine with most wonderful brightness over our pathway through life if we look upon Mary. She also was a child of man. God called her into existence that she might one day become His Mother, Queen of heaven and earth. Therefore, she entered the world pure, holy, immaculate; her precious soul unstained by the slightest breath of sin; and she lived only to fulfill the holy will of God.

"I am the handmaid of the Lord; be it done unto me according to Thy word." In this disposition Mary lived and suffered, and now, resplendent in glory, her place in heaven is by the side of Christ. If we glance at Mary, the Queen of Apostles, the Mother who heard the word of revelation from the lips of the *Word* incarnate, during nearly thirty years she spent in solitude at Nazareth, what a motive we find for appreciating the benefits of faith and deeming it a priceless blessing, which should call forth our ardent gratitude! Without any merit of our own, we have been made children of the holy, the infallible Church, a happiness which millions, both before and after Christ, have not enjoyed, and which will be unknown to millions in time to come.

But merely to be penetrated with a high appreciation of the truths of faith will not avail; we must *live* in accordance with its precepts. To prevent this conformity, and to induce us to transgress the law of

God, is the constant aim of Satan. But let us look upon Mary, and we will have a most powerful motive to crush the serpent's head in the first moment of temptation, that we may not afflict the heart of the stainless Virgin and Mother, by yielding to sin. And oh, what shame will overwhelm that evil spirit! He will retire in dismay if we, in the moment of temptation, call upon that sure refuge, the invoking Mother.

But if Satan does not succeed in making us plunge into mortal sin, he puts forth every effort of his diabolical art to weaken the kingdom of God in our souls, that, leading a lukewarm and indifferent life, we may not strive after perfection, as every soul redeemed by Christ should do.

To enkindle our fervor and to avoid the danger of a tepid life, the most efficacious means is a glance at Mary, the mirror of justice. What an incentive to zeal is the example of her humility, devotion, self-denial, and fraternal charity!

How inviting and amiable the exercise of these, as of all the other virtues, appears in this most admirable Virgin!

If we serve God in this manner, beloved in Christ, we may be well assured that hell, with all its powers, will be arrayed against us; our faith may be exposed to many most severe and painful trials; God Himself will, perhaps, visit us with afflictions the most trying. In every case let us look at Mary beneath the Cross, and sorrow will turn to the sweetest joy; a radiant light will shine upon our earthly griefs, for we

will bear them for Christ's dear sake. The thought, that through sorrow Jesus entered into His joy, that through sufferings Mary and the blessed saints attained eternal bliss, will strengthen us, give us courage to fight, and render us invincible to the foe.

A true *devotion* to Mary will furnish us with a *shield*, most efficacious for our protection in the spiritual combat, which is her perfect readiness, if we have sinned, to assist us in obtaining forgiveness from God, and in once more being reconciled to Him. She is surely the Mother of mercy and the refuge of sinners, who assists us and prays for us, that we may not remain enemies to her Son, Whom she loves so well.

At the same time her hidden life with Christ in Nazareth, is a figure of the intimacy which we, children of the Holy Church, enjoy with Christ, the Conqueror of death and hell, Who abides with us in the most holy Sacrament, offers Himself for us, and even enters into our hearts. Oh, let us frequently avail ourselves of this happiness, and in such a manner that we may derive from it that benefit which Mary gained from the presence of Jesus at Nazareth.

Is our faith a perfect, an enlightened, a living one? Then will it provide us also with those other weapons to gain the victory, of which St. Paul speaks: "the girdle of truth"—faith teaches us with infallible certainty—"the breastplate of justice," "your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace," "and take unto you the helmet of salvation, the sword of

the Spirit." These weapons, beloved in Christ, will enable you to conquer, even if all the powers of hell be arrayed against you. Believe with a living faith, make good use of those unerring weapons, for never, never, will the Christian who clings to them be lost.

And when you look upon the Scapular, which you wear in honor of Mary, pray to that blessed Mother, that she may obtain for you the perfect plenitude and power of faith, that you may be firmly grounded in all its truths, and live in the observance of its holy precepts. Thus may faith, with its warnings, requirements, and promises, illumine your pathway through life, and may you give glorious testimony thereto by the possession of a heart free from sin, and richly endowed with virtue.

May the arrows of temptation fall powerless against this Scapular of faith, and drop as from an impenetrable shield, harmless, to the ground. And, above all, may you set out upon that awful journey to the other world, under the protection of the ever-blessed Mother of God, as a soul saved by her example and intercession, in the power of faith vivified by love and animated by hope.—Amen.

SECOND SERMON.

"I am the mother of holy hope."—Eccl. xxiv, 24.

THAT which is particularly necessary to the warrior is courage; for a coward fights not, but ignominiously takes to flight, and is entirely overcome.

Now, what augments and enlivens the courage of a warrior is, first, the possession of suitable *weapons*; and, secondly, what is of greater importance, the *protection* which he has reason to expect from the brave and experienced warriors engaged with him in the combat.

And this, beloved in Christ, is precisely what we children of the Church militant need to combat victoriously for God and the salvation of our immortal souls: unerring weapons and powerful protection. We also need courage; and this courage is supported and strengthened in us by the influence of *holy hope*. But that this hope may prove efficacious, and protect us like a shield in the battle, we must hasten to Mary, who calls herself the Mother of holy hope. And in truth she proves herself such to her faithful children.

The Church salutes Mary as "Star of the Sea;" for as, amid the threatenings of a storm upon the mighty deep, the sight of a star animates the courage of the navigators, quiets their fears, and revives their hopes to soon reach in safety the longed-for haven:

So the thought of Mary acts upon us children of

the Church, sailing through the storms of life, and steering towards the harbor of eternal bliss.

Mary, the Mother of holy hope, the star which glitters so brightly amid the clouds of life, the star which shines to illumine our path to heaven, will be the subject of my theme to-day.

O Mary, kind Mother, to thy protection we fly! Invested with the holy Scapular, by which we proclaim ourselves to be thy children, we invoke thy aid. Show thyself a Mother, and from eternal death save all who come to thee!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, for the greater glory of God.

“We were saved by hope,” so says St. Paul; and this assurance at least makes known to us how important it is to strengthen in ourselves this divine virtue if we wish strenuously to battle against the enemies of our souls’ salvation. And the reason why St. Paul speaks with such high commendation of Christian hope is perfectly clear to every one who reflects upon the influence of this virtue upon our lives as children of God. For all salvation is referred to Christ, through Whom alone we are saved. Hence, for those souls who waited during four thousand years for the coming Redeemer, hope became the anchor which saved them from the shipwreck of sin.

Our hope, too, after His coming, is in Christ. It is the anchor on which the bark of the Church depends

for safety amid the tempest of persecution ; it is a motive power which every child of the Church must feed to give his faith an outward expression and to bear up against the tribulations of life.

Hope gives *light, strength, and perseverance* even in earthly affairs. It is indispensable for success in life. It is especially necessary for the soldier on the battle-field when about to face a deadly foe. But, above all, in that terrible struggle in which we, as children of the militant Church, must engage from the cradle to the grave, holy hope inspires with indomitable energy and irresistible courage,—and this for three reasons :

First, because the benefits which this divine virtue places before our eyes as the pledge of victory are so indescribably great and glorious.

Secondly, because it reminds us that the weapons which faith offers us, if earnestly used, procure for us a certain victory.

Thirdly, because it recalls to our minds God's promise of victory if we combat valiantly, and His solemn assurance of unfailing protection.

Listen to the promise of the Lord : " Because he has confided in Me, I will deliver him and glorify him illustriously." Thus He speaks by the mouth of the Psalmist : " Look about you and see if there be one on earth who put his trust in God and was deluded or forsaken." Thus the inspired wise man challenged God's people. And David gave vent to his unbounded confidence in God thus : " I have hoped in Thee, O

Lord; I will never be confounded!" As this virtue, therefore, is of such importance, should we not exert every means to confirm ourselves therein?

Now, there is no means more effective than to hasten to Mary, whom the Church calls the Mother of holy hope, and unto whose care Christ, from the tree of the cross, committed the whole human race as her children, with the power and privilege to petition Him for their salvation, and to assist them in every necessity, spiritual and corporal. And with what readiness do we ever behold Mary fulfilling this maternal duty!

Let us, then, confide in her, the pledge of our hope, for we may rest assured that whatever be the motives which inspire our hearts with confidence in friends who have, besides the power, also the wish and the determination to help us, we have more cause to salute Mary as our hope, and take refuge with her.

The first reason which encourages us to take refuge with a friend and entreat him to aid us is the conviction that he has the *power* to do it. What a motive to place unlimited confidence in Mary! Jesus, Who is almighty, is her Son, and, as a devoted Son, He wishes to honor His Mother and to give her joy. To Him had been given "all power in heaven and on earth," and He has communicated it to His Mother. To gratify her He performed the first miracle at Cana, in the presence of His disciples; and if Mary to-day asks Him in heaven, is there any favor He will not grant?

Jesus, the Author of grace, has appointed Mary to be the dispenser of grace. St. Gertrude once had a vis-

ion in which she beheld the throne of Jesus in heaven, and the throne of Mary, the heart of Jesus and the heart of Mary. She saw, besides, a stream flowing from the heart of Jesus into the heart of Mary, and from thence back into the heart of Jesus, and again into the heart of Mary, and from thence through heaven to earth, and into purgatory.

Beloved in Christ, what are we to understand from this consoling vision? I answer: Jesus merits—Mary dispenses. The father of the house earns, the mother distributes. Thus the order of grace is reflected in the order of nature, and the two are in perfect accord.

Moreover, Mary is the Queen of Angels, the Queen of Saints. At Mary's behest all these ministering spirits are ready every moment to assist us.

The second motive which inspires us with confidence to ask for assistance, is a conviction that the one to whom we apply *knows our wants*, and being, perhaps, father, mother, brother, or friend, has the *will* to aid us. What a motive for us children of God to put our trust in Mary! She knows our wants, she is united to God, sees all in Him, and is the seat of divine wisdom. She will help us, because she is indeed all mercy, and loves us more tenderly than an earthly mother can ever love her child; for she perceives, with vision bright and clear, the value of the souls for whom Christ shed every drop of His blood.

Since, then, the Lord bestowed upon her so tender, kind, and merciful a heart, is it not most fitting that she, the Mother of the Redeemer, should aid these

souls to gain eternal life? Besides, she gave the promise—she, the Queen of Apostles, promised her dying Son upon the cross to be our Mother, and to do all in her power to guide those souls who would fly to her protection, through the storms of life to a haven of rest.

The third motive which increases our confidence in asking assistance, is the assurance that the one to whom we apply has *actually helped* many others. Now, what is the testimony of experience on this point? We need only glance at the many shrines dedicated to Mary, where an innumerable multitude of her devoted children flock; where miraculous cures are of constant occurrence; where, from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same, Mary assists her faithful clients.

And indeed, my dear Christians, we need only say the well-known prayer of St. Bernard to be strengthened in our confidence. "The ear hath never heard," this great saint and servant of Mary assures us almost one thousand years ago—"The ear hath never heard that he who ran to her for refuge was forsaken of God."

This bold assertion is confirmed by the experience of every devout child of Mary. Whosoever in his misery sought refuge in her maternal love, full of confidence in her power and goodness, has experienced her protection. She loves to aid us—the more as she knows how earnestly the Sacred Heart of Jesus desires us to have recourse to her, especially in our spiritual

wants and all that tends to nourish divine love in our souls.

“Mother of mercy, Refuge of sinners.” Thus does the Church salute Mary. And, by means of the Hail Mary, she repeats over and again through the lips of her members, “Pray for us poor sinners.” And thus, from the little child whose lips can scarce form the words, to the venerable Pontiff who rules the destinies of the Church, all Christendom is calling, “Pray for us sinners!”

I have, however, one caution to add: Satan, who deems nothing too holy or sacred to be abused, makes use even of this confidence in Mary to work our ruin and destruction. There are souls who remain willfully in the state of sin, and suppose that if they only put their trust in Mary, and daily say some prayers in her honor, they have done all that is necessary to secure their salvation. This is particularly the case in regard to the Scapular. Many think that if even they live in mortal sin, provided they are only faithful in wearing the Scapular, Mary will never permit them to die in that state. This, however, is injustice. It is superstition. By that presumptuous thought such men sin grievously. What! to expect Mary to protect, and permit them to lead abandoned lives, and at the same time favor them with her maternal care! This would make of Mary not only a refuge of sinners, but their accomplice. God will punish them for this, and they will not even have the grace to die with the Scapular on. It will be taken from them in changing their clothes,

as remarkable examples have shown. There are well attested instances of suicides who were found without scapulars, though they were known to have faithfully worn this sacred badge.

If the Scapular is to be for us a pledge of Mary's special protection during life and at the hour of death, and even in purgatory, then it is essential that we wear it as a remembrance—an admonition to strive, as true children of Mary, after perfection, and to follow her example. When this is the case—yes, then the Scapular will indeed prove for us a most effectual shield; will strengthen our confidence in Mary, as Mother of holy hope, as the consoling Star of our eternal salvation.—Amen!

THIRD SERMON.

"I am the mother of fair love."—Eccl. xxiv, 24.

EVEN as the Church has her marks by which she is known to be the true Church of Christ, so likewise are found in the lives of her true children, marks by which they are distinguished from the infidel and the heretic. These marks are a reflection of the Church herself in the true Catholic life. Among these characteristic attributes of the true children of God is one which shines with especial splendor, and that is, their devotion, their confidence, their love towards Mary. That this trait is indeed characteristic of faithful and zealous Catholics, is proved by the very reproach and ridicule heaped upon them in consequence, by those who are not of "the household of the faith."

But this reproach becomes for us a source of consolation. The holy and venerable Simeon predicted it of the Blessed Virgin in the temple: "Through you, the hearts of the children of men shall be made manifest." Should we, therefore, shrink from a reproach which will, if patiently borne, gain us such treasures in heaven?

"From henceforth all generations shall call me blessed," so Mary herself assures us, with holy exultation in the "Magnificat."

But, my dear Christians, as not every prayer, which is offered up to the Most High, is genuine and fervent, as the homage paid to God by the lips is often ren-

dered void by a dissolute life, so the veneration which is professed for Mary becomes suspected and valueless, because not manifested in action. A person may wear, in her honor, the Scapular upon a heart, which crucifies her Son by mortal sin, and, therefore, deeply wounds her loving heart.

This is not to wear it as a faithful child of the "Mother of fair love."

What this attribute of Mary, as Mother of fair love requires of her clients, that they may wear her dress meritoriously, as a pledge of salvation, I shall explain to-day.

O Mary, replenish our hearts with the fire of that love which burns in your tender heart!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, for the greater glory of God!

As I said before, there is a prayer which mounts straight to the throne of the living God, and a prayer, which, coming only from the lips, and contradicted by dissoluteness of conduct, merits for him who pronounces it the reproach: "His prayer shall be turned to sin." So there is also a true veneration of Mary, and one which is only apparent.

The first is manifested by him, who, by his life shows that he is really in earnest to please Mary; the second appears in the lukewarm, presumptuous Christian, who makes his exterior veneration of Mary a pretext for living with the greater wantonness in a con-

tinual state of sin, foolishly imagining that Mary will not forsake him, since he honors her occasionally with his lips.

And what is, indeed, the principal reason that our lives contradict the exterior and apparent devotion to Mary? The answer is suggested by my text: "I am the Mother of fair love." Yes, hence arises the contradiction. The heart, whose every throb is but a feeling of sin as it beats beneath the Scapular, is not filled with the beautiful, holy, and sanctifying love of Mary, but with the wicked, sinful, and disorderly love of creatures. Their enjoyment and possession is preferred by the sinner before God and his beatitudes. The sinner has no right to declare: "O my God, I love Thee with my whole heart, with my whole soul, with my whole mind, and with all my strength!"

Mary had every right to repeat this prayer, for she is the Mother of fair love. This expression, "Mother of fair love," tells us at the same time that not only Mary loved God in this manner, but that veneration to her, to be true, must at the same time fill our hearts with similar dispositions of love; must produce and prove within us this true and beautiful love of God. To understand this better, let us consider separately the different kinds of love which burn in the heart of Mary.

The *first* is the most perfect love to *God* the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

How far exalted is the love of Mary towards God, even above that of the angels themselves! Now which

are the principal sources of the love of God? First, the knowledge of His infinite perfections; and, secondly, the appreciation of His benefits.

Now, then, Mary is, as Holy Scripture testifies, the seat of divine Wisdom; she is the Queen of the Cherubim, those angels that are distinguished for their knowledge of God.

Who can imagine, then, with what unquenchable ardor the fire of Mary's love rises up to God?

And what thanks does not Mary owe to the triune God! God the Father chose her from all eternity as His daughter; God the Son as His Mother; God the Holy Ghost as His spouse. What prerogatives are contained in this triple relationship of Mary! Privileges by far greater than any conferred upon the Angels or Saints, were imparted to her; no one can, on earth, even faintly realize their importance. We shall, no doubt, understand more about them in heaven. But St. Thomas of Aquin does not hesitate to assert that the excellence to which Mary was elevated by the most Holy Trinity, surpasses, and will ever exceed even the understanding of the angels, on account of the mystery of the Incarnation of the Son of God. The extent of this mystery, in its fullness, is known to God alone. And radiant in this glorious dignity, Mary appears in her majesty as Queen of heaven and earth, so rich in the possession of the rarest endowments of nature and grace, that she may be compared to the ocean, into which all rivers flow; for it was the dearest joy of her divine Son to pour into her immac-

ulate heart the most royal gifts. Oh, how inflamed with love for God was, and is, this virginal heart!

And in our own regard, how can we think of this pre-election of Mary, without congratulating ourselves upon having a right to call her our Mother? And even if God has not elected us to such an eminent degree of glory as He bestowed upon her, He, notwithstanding, created us according to His image, and chose us, therefore, to enjoy, at some future day, in heaven, the most perfect bliss, as the faithful children of Mary.

The *second* stream of love which, uniting with the first, has its source in that immaculate heart, is her love towards *Christ* as man. She certainly is His Mother, and in a greater degree than any other mother, for *she* is a virgin Mother, and the Son of God took His human nature from her *alone*. "Thou art all mine," might well be her joyous thought, when she pressed the Infant Jesus to her maternal breast, and nursed the Lord of heaven and earth. And, surely, if God fills the heart of every mother with such affection for her child, particularly if she has long desired to be blessed with one, and still more, if she sees it grow up highly gifted, most amiable, and beholds in it a pledge of her dignity and happiness on earth, who can imagine what the heart of Mary felt for Jesus? And this fire of love towards Him increased every day of the thirty years during which she dwelt with Him under one roof at Nazareth.

Suppose a man were, during thirty years, to pour oil

into a fire, what a vast conflagration would result! The whole earth would be one immense sea of flames. What this oil would be to the fire, that, during thirty years, Jesus was for Mary's love. His appearance, each holy word which fell from His divine lips, His every act in the house of Nazareth, increased her love for Him. But when Jesus went forth upon His apostolic mission, then His incomparable preaching, even like that oil upon the fire, enkindled the love of her heart to still greater ardor, as did also the sight of the miracles which He performed, commencing with the first which He wrought in Cana, at her own request. At last she stood beneath the cross, as co-redemptrix and Eve of the New Testament, and heard Jesus make her the dispenser of His infinite merits in the kingdom of that Church which arose from the wound of His Sacred Heart on the cross.

What ardent gratitude glowed in the heart of Mary for all the favors granted to her; gratitude and maternal love strive for the mastery in her—our Mother!

In contemplating her our own hearts can not remain unmoved. How could we look at Mary, the dolorous Mother, who made such a sacrifice for us—how hear in spirit the words of Christ from the cross: "*Behold thy Mother!*"—and not feel an increase of love toward Jesus for this inestimable gift, which He gave us from the cross? How could we reflect, that almost in the agony of death the Saviour remembered us, and not increase in love from day to day?

The whole appearance of Mary, whether we see her

holding the divine Infant in her arms, or standing at the foot of the cross, is so beautiful, so holy, that we instantly perceive the value of our Redemption, and recognize what a joy it is for us to be children of that Church in which Jesus deposited the word of revelation, and which He enriched with every means of salvation, besides placing it under the special patronage of that blessed *Mother*.

The love which burns in the heart of Mary, in fine, is a well-ordered, ardent, self-sacrificing, magnanimous, and faithful love towards all the children of men, whom the Lord transmitted to her from the cross. Besides Christ, no one knows the value of souls so well as Mary, the Mother of the Redeemer; she saw all what her divine Son Himself did for them.

How mightily, therefore, did the love of Mary increase for Him, as well as for every child of man; how tenderly she thought of every one of those weary steps of this divine Son, Who offered for them His whole life, His passion and death.

And in regard to the *fraternal charity* which we should cultivate in our hearts, what a motive to love our neighbor as ourselves may be found in the wish to please Mary, even if it were not a precept which God has given to us! For, how much will the heart of a mother be pleased and consoled, when we assist a child of hers who is in need and great danger! The mother will regard our efforts and kind offices as if they were conferred upon herself; nay, her joy and

thankfulness would be even more intense than if she herself had received them.

Such is the influence of the devotion to Mary, if we look at her as the Mother of fair love.

But, alas ! too often the heart is full of that disordered love which afflicts her mother's heart with the deepest wounds.

What a gain for the soul, if the holy Scapular reminds us daily of Mary, the Mother of fair love, in the manner I have to-day endeavored to describe ! Oh, may it do so ; may it cause the love of God, the love of Jesus, the love of Mary, and the active, holy love of our neighbor daily to increase in our hearts. Then the Scapular will, indeed, become a coat of mail, and a shield in our combat against temptation to ill-ordered, impure, and unholy love ; and it will make us faithful and unwavering in good, according to the assurance of St. Paul : " For love is strong as death, and should a man give all his substance, he shall despise it as nothing." Therefore, ye faithful children of the Catholic Church, be invested with the Scapular of Mount Carmel, whose use the Church has approved centuries ago, and for whose feast she has composed a special office. If rightly used it will increase the flame of love in our hearts, and we shall be permitted to apply, what St. Paul says of our love for Christ, to true devotion to His blessed Mother : " Then in all things we will conquer through her—through our love towards Mary."—Amen !

FEAST OF THE ASSUMPTION.

FIRST SERMON.

“Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee!”—Luke i, 28.

MOST fitting it was that the beautiful casket which enshrined the soul of Mary as a precious jewel should not be subjected to the dissolution of the grave. Therefore the blessed Mother of God was assumed, body and soul, to the realms of bliss, and exalted above all the angels and saints in the fullness and completeness of splendor and beauty.

Let us rejoice, then, on this glorious festival, and praise the Lord of hosts in company with the whole celestial choir.

This is the day on which the Church invites her children to celebrate the Assumption of the Mother of God, and they accept the invitation with joy; for, in love and devotion to Mary, all true devoted Catholics find their greatest delight.

Now, if we are filled with consolation as often as we address to Mary the prayer, in which the Church has combined the salutations of the angel and of St. Elizabeth, together with an invocation of her own—“*Ave Maria*,” or “Hail Mary”—to-day these words

must be replete with a special unction and sweetness ; and therefore this salutation ascends, on this beautiful festival, from millions and millions of her faithful clients, like a sweet perfume to her glorious throne.

And if this salutation, already on earth, fills us with delight, how infinite will not our joy be when one day we shall greet the Holy Virgin with the same salutation in heaven, as children of God, redeemed by the precious Blood of her divine Son!

The joy which the ransomed soul will feel in saluting the Mother of God with the "Ave Maria" in heaven shall be the subject of meditation on this beauteous festive day.

O Mary, accept our greeting here on earth in anticipation of that which we hope one day to offer before thy throne in heaven, and take us unto thy heart to-day and forever!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, for the greater glory of God!

We deem ourselves happy if we are permitted to salute persons of an *exalted rank*. Our hearts are glad if we can pay homage to the ruler of the country—be he King, Emperor, or President, as the case may be; and the measure of our joy would be full if we can salute the Pope himself.

This feeling of joy becomes still more intense if the objects of our admiration be connected with us by bonds of relationship; if we love them; if we are in-

debted to them for many benefits, and hope to receive still greater favors from them in the future.

Children of Mary, endeavor to realize how great must be the rejoicings of a soul that, entering heaven, beholds Mary upon her celestial throne, and hastens to the embrace of that loving Mother!

When Gabriel brought the message to Mary, he found the Virgin in solitude, pouring forth her soul in prayer to God in her humble little home at Nazareth; and, nevertheless, he saluted her with the most profound veneration.

The message which he brought to her gave him clearly to understand the Majesty and Dignity of the elected Virgin.

And this is why we on earth already salute her with such veneration and joy, because we are well aware of her exalted dignity in the kingdom of God!

This feeling grows more intense within us when it is our happy lot to visit those places where Mary is especially honored and praised; where many miracles have been performed through her gracious intercession, and where thousands at once salute the Mother of God. Remember Loretto, Lourdes, Einsiedel.

But what will be our joy when we, for the first time, salute this Virgin Mother with the "*Ave Maria*" in heaven, and behold her, for the first time, in that glory and majesty with which she was clothed by the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost in heaven.

What joy will be ours when we behold her in the irresistible charm of her numberless merits, as Mother

of God, as Co-redemptrix of man, and as the heroic woman, who walked with Christ to the very foot of the cross!

How we will rejoice when we bow down before her as Queen of the Angels, whose prerogatives are all crowned in her; and; at the same time, behold blended in the majesty of the Queen of all Saints the glory of all Patriarchs, Prophets, Apostles, Martyrs, Confessors and of all ranks of the blessed!

On all sides will be entoned anthems of praise, homage, admiration, and thanksgiving! Ah, yes, what consolation will it be for us to behold Mary one day, and salute her in this Majesty and Glory!

It is, indeed, true that already on earth we salute her as *full of grace*. But in what this fullness of grace precisely consists, we can not as yet realize; neither can we know on earth the perfection with which Mary corresponded with this plenitude of grace, and her consequent increase of *merits*, in respect to which Holy Scripture says of her: "Others have gathered riches, but you surpassed them all."

But in heaven we shall clearly behold the ocean of graces which the Holy Trinity bestowed upon Mary; we shall see combined in her heart all the favors granted to men and angels, as the waters of all the streams are commingled in the sea.

"Full of grace!" in wondering admiration the child of God cries out to Mary in heaven. "The Lord is with thee!" thus spoke the Angel to Mary on earth. He was permitted to salute her thus on account of

her intimate union with God by the plenitude of sanctifying grace which dwells within her, and which made her more pleasing to God than all the angels and saints.

"The Lord is with thee!" Thus do we salute Mary when we see her with the Infant Jesus in her arms; or think of her dwelling with Him in the house at Nazareth; or accompanying Him in His apostolic journeys, or standing beneath the cross.

Now she sits enthroned in honor and glory, for her place in heaven is *nearest* that of her divine Son, Who shares with her His majesty, His beatitude, and joys to an extent that we shall understand only in heaven.

"The Lord is with thee!" Thus will we greet the Blessed Virgin when, after having safely passed through the trials and temptations of life, we are led, by our guardian angel, to her glorious throne.

Yes, and when that happy day arrives, we may truly add: "He is with me also." O Mother of fair love, behold I come to participate in the glory and beatitude which through you the King of heaven distributes to all the blessed!

What joy it is for us to meet those with whom God has connected us by the bonds of relationship, friendship, or love, especially if it be a fondly loved mother! Child of Mary, with what delight will you one day greet, in heaven, that tender Mother,—*Mother of Jesus*,—Mother of God! *My Mother*, all hail to you! There only will we know the depth of the maternal love which filled her heart for us—the heart of her to whom the Lord bequeathed us from the cross.

Concentrate the hearts of all mothers into one, it would be far from containing the love of Mary for each of the children of God. Never, until we have passed through the golden gates which lead to the mansions of eternal bliss, can we know the faithful and tender love with which she protects us in life, and intercedes for us with her divine Son that temptation may not be allowed to vanquish us. And when the wiles of the evil one succeed but too well, and we are so unhappy as to commit sin and offend God, it is Mary who pleads with her divine Son until she has obtained for us the grace of repentance and amendment of life.

It is Mary who preserves us from relapsing into sin, and gains for us every grace which the Lord designs for our sanctification, particularly the grace of final perseverance.

“Hail Mary!” Well may this cry ascend in heaven from the soul rescued from eternal death by her gracious prayers. To thee, O dearest Mother, I owe my beatitude and joy. Then what a happiness to behold thee here; to hasten to thy maternal arms; to love and enjoy with thee forever! When, mid the gathering shadows of the valley of tears, my cry went forth to thee: “Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now, and at the hour of our death,” now in heaven I see how all the infinite attributes of God glorify themselves in thee, and, as in a mirror, reflect His mercy, longanimity, and sanctity; His majesty and glory; His beauty, beatitude, and love. I am now permitted to participate in this thy glory and delight.

O happiness beyond compare! "Whatever is mine, is thine," is the acclamation which, coming from the blissful lips, re-echoes in my heart. Yes, Mary, Mother, I come to the refuge of thy maternal love, and embrace thee on thy throne in heaven. Ah, would that we were allowed to view, if but for an instant, that realm beyond the skies, and see how a soul, purified by the flames of purgatory, and released by the prayers of some faithful friend, now enters paradise, and receives the embrace of that loving mother, who welcomes her happy child in the realm of eternal beatitude.

Beloved in Christ, if you have lived as true children of Mary, you also will, at the hour of death, enjoy the bliss of a welcome from her.

Therefore, salute her often and often with the angelic salutation; and, calling upon her here on earth, say to her: "Mary, pray for me now; obtain for me the grace that I, as thy true child, may follow thy example on earth, avoid sin, crush the head of the serpent, and imitate Jesus by living a holy life according to the state in which I have been placed."

To-day, therefore, when the homage of all her devoted children ascends like the sweetness of fragrant flowers to Mary, beg of her to obtain for you perseverance and fidelity unto your happy end; that you may one day expire in her arms and experience her assistance in purgatory, so that you may the more speedily be enabled to cry out in heaven: "Hail Mary! Mother! Now I am with you, and will forever remain with you!"

This consideration on the Angelic salutation, as it will one day be uttered by us in heaven, if we sink into the sleep of death as children of that Blessed Mother, will serve as a constant admonition to anticipate this salutation by repeating it on earth in a spirit of recollection, and with the whole ardor of our love and confidence in Mary, that it may always ascend as the sweet odor of our devotion to her, the Queen of heaven.—Amen!

SECOND SERMON.

“Mary hath chosen the better part, which shall not be taken from her.”—
Luke x, 42.

“**M**ARY is exalted above all the choirs of angels.”
Thus, does the Church rejoice on the feast of to-day. Yes, Mary is, indeed, elevated to the most exalted degree of glory in heaven; for enthroned as Queen of heaven and earth, her place is nearest her divine, her beloved Son.

It is written of Jesus her Son: “God has exalted Him and given Him a name, that in the name of Jesus every knee shall bow in heaven, on earth, and under the earth, and every tongue shall confess that Jesus entered into the glory of the Father.” This is also true of the glorification and honor of His most blessed Mother. He has elevated her and given her a name, that at the name of Mary every creature shall pay homage in heaven and on earth, and every tongue shall confess that Mary has entered into the glory of her Son.

No other creature possesses such a share in the glorification of Christ, in heaven, as Mary; and why? Ah! it was because she stood nearest to Christ upon earth. And what, my dearest Christians, gained her this great grace? It was her deep humility. In other words: Mary descended into the deepest depths of humiliation by the perfection to which she carried the virtue of humility, according to the example and imi-

tation of Jesus Christ; and in proportion to the depth to which she humbled herself on earth, Christ, on His part, exalted her throne in heaven.

If we wish to enter the kingdom of glory as children of God; if we wish to reach heaven and participate in the glory of the Son; it is incumbent on us, while still on earth, to tread, with willing steps, the path of humiliations.

If we wish to exalt the throne of our glorification in heaven, then it is essential that we humble ourselves in life. This will become clear to us if we consider Mary as our model.

I say in this regard: Mary ascended the highest point of glory in heaven, because, after her divine Son, no one on earth ever descended so deep than she in the practice of humility.

O Mary, most humble of all creatures, obtain for me, in preference to all other virtues, true humility of heart!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, for the greater honor and glory of God!

I said: Mary attained the highest degree of glory in heaven, because she humbled herself most deeply on earth, and, by the humility of her heart, modeled her life on that of her divine Son. It is written of Christ, that he not only humbled, but, as it were, annihilated himself, and that, therefore, God the Father exalted Him and elevated Him in glory above all the

heavens. Through the prophets He styled Himself the lowest among men—an outcast of the people. He, the King of heaven, permitted Himself to die the death of a malefactor, to be ranked lower than a murderer, and even to be crucified between a murderer and a thief.

If Christ thus lowered Himself to the rank of the least of men, such likewise must have been the disposition of her whom He placed nearest to Himself on earth. Most justly, therefore, has St. Bernard said: “If Christ had found a virgin more humble than Mary, He surely would have chosen her, and not Mary, for His Mother.”

We are informed, by private revelations to the Saints, that it was the singular desire of Mary to have the happiness of being a handmaid of that chosen virgin who should be so highly favored as to become the Mother of the promised Messiah, and yet it was upon herself that the divine choice was fixed. And why?

Mary herself, in that canticle of praise which is now entoned over the entire Catholic world, tells us why she was chosen: “Because He hath regarded the humility of His handmaid.” Thus Mary proclaimed her holy joy in the “Magnificat,” when Elizabeth saluted her as the Mother of the incarnate Word of God.

But it was not only this disposition of her heart, this humility, which prepared her for the dignity of becoming the Mother of God; it was also because

she reached, in each of her works, the highest perfection of merit. In this most perfect humility we can certainly find the reason that she never in any way followed her own will, that no single action of her's was ever marred by any shadow of self-will, but that her whole endeavor was to know and fulfill the *Will of God*.

Even when the angel saluted her, she called herself "the handmaid of the Lord." And how beautifully was this disposition of her heart verified at her elevation to the Maternity of Christ; for when she was informed by the angel that she was the chosen Mother of the Saviour of the world, and therefore to be exalted above all creatures in heaven and on earth, she did not entone the "Te Deum;" no evidence of excessive or exuberant joy appeared in her heavenly countenance; but she uttered only the words of entire submission to the most holy will of God:

"Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me according to Thy word."

"My will in her"—that is, the praise which the Holy Ghost confers upon her. Oh, how majestic, how holy, how great, is Mary in the humility of her heart, which, excepting the Sacred Heart of Christ, was in no other creature, not even in the angels of heaven, manifested in so perfect a degree. And in this perfect humility can be found the reason why the merits of her actions surpassed, in an immeasurable degree, that of all others, both men and angels.

It is not from the number of precious stones which

are exposed to view that we judge of a person's wealth, but from their size, their clearness and value. All the good works of the angels and saints may be compared to precious stones; but what determines their value? I answer: conformity of intention with the most holy *will* of God unmingled with any alloy of self-will, or obstinacy, or self-interest. Therefore, if I were so happy as to have the merit of only one good work of Mary, I would not change it for the united merits of all the angels and saints.

On the contrary, what, indeed, too often diminishes the merits of our good actions? It is a want of humility, the dust of self-love, self-conceit, and a lack of purity of intention, which causes man, with all the good works which he performs for the honor of God, to keep before his eyes *himself*—his own *interest*—which urges him to long for honor and distinction. Therefore, if we wish to increase the glory of that throne which awaits us in heaven, and to be nearer still to Mary, then it becomes necessary to humble ourselves, and to open, in all the good we do, the contest with self-love, and to desire nothing else than the greater honor and glory of God, for He has promised: "Those who glorify Me, those will I also one day glorify."

What will increase our glory in heaven is especially our union with the most holy will of God in all *sufferings* and *afflictions*.

Glance at the most holy Virgin, in her earthly life, and you will realize the truth of this remark.

On earth, nearest the Cross; in heaven, next to the throne of her divine Son: on earth, Queen of martyrs; in heaven, Queen of the glorious and resplendent host of saints and angels: on earth, suffering the pangs of a heart pierced with the sword of grief; in heaven, happy in the possession of a heart filled with the purest celestial bliss.

And, my dear brethren, had not Christ Himself to enter into the joy of heaven by the rugged path of pain and grief? Undoubtedly He had, as we learn from the words addressed by Him through the Prophet: "Oh, all you that pass by the way, attend and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow!"

This was the mournful plaint which Christ, through the lips of the prophet, uttered centuries before, and well might it be addressed, by Mary, to the children of men, as she stood beneath the Cross: "Oh, all you that pass by the way"—all you who, during the long course of centuries, will listen to the tale of my Son's passion—"attend and see if there be, except His, any sorrow like unto mine!"

Thus Christ entered into His joys and ascended the throne of His glory; thus did Mary and all the blessed who ever entered, or will enter, heaven, attain eternal joy. There is no other way to heaven than that of patience, of suffering for the love of God, in perfect union with His most holy will.

And why is it that we do not tread the path of suffering with the unfaltering step with which Jesus and Mary, and all the saints of God, walked therein?

It is because humility is wanting in us; for how many, beloved in Christ, when the hand of the Lord presses upon them, cry out, in utter want of resignation: "What have we done, O Lord, to be thus afflicted?"

This is especially so when the trouble, or injury, comes from some one, whom we have benefited, but who has repaid us with ingratitude. It seldom happens that the children of the Church do not receive the cross from the hand of man as well as from the hand of God himself; but, alas! equally seldom do we find them exclaim, with sincere humility: "This and more yet have I deserved! It is, O God, Thy hand which strikes and chastises me, or which afflicts me, in order to give me occasion, through suffering, to show my love to Thee." The trial is still harder so, if the trouble comes from one at whose hands we have had reason to expect treatment of a different kind. Mary experienced all these afflictions at the foot of the Cross. But she rejoiced to suffer innocently with the innocent Jesus, and to take upon herself the scorn and derision of the enemies and crucifiers of our Lord, in perfect union with the most holy will of God.

Behold here the degrees of humility, which lead us, while upon earth, through lowly paths, that in heaven we may reach to high degrees of glory, of that humility which prompts us to say: "O my God, O Lord, I deserve not the happiness of being a child of election, a child of thy Holy Church. I deserve no

praise for the good I do. To Thee alone, O Lord, be all the honor. In every decree of Thine I will kiss Thy gracious fatherly hand; and when Thou dost please to try me by some heavy sorrow I will cry out: 'Thy will be done.' "

And if you one day receive with this resignation the announcement of your approaching death, and yield up your spirit in perfect conformity to the will of God, desiring nothing further on earth than to die in the manner decreed by Him, O then, indeed, you will ascend so high in heaven that your throne will be bathed in the light of glory that inundates the throne of heaven's Queen; and this because, while here on earth, O happy *child of Mary*, you tried to be like her: *Meek and humble!*—Amen.

THIRD SERMON.

“When shall I come and appear before Thy face?”—Ps. xli.

WE read in the life of St. Stanislaus Kostka that, being visited by sickness in Vienna, Mary appeared to him with the Infant Jesus upon her arm. The divine Child embraced the holy youth, while Mary told him distinctly that he should leave the world and enter the Society of Jesus. Without hesitation he obeyed, and traveled on foot all the way to Rome, where St. Francis Borgia received him into the Society.

But God had decreed that ere long he should set out upon another journey, and travel from Rome to Heaven. He was still in the morning of life, in the first bloom of early youth, when, before the year which had witnessed his entrance into religion elapsed, on the Feast of the Assumption, his pure soul winged its flight to God. What shortened his days and burst the bands which bound his soul to earth, was the ardor of his desire to behold Mary in heaven. He wrote to her in terms of glowing love, begging her to take him from this world, and to obtain for him the favor of celebrating the approaching feast of her glorious Assumption in the company of the angels and of the saints.

Mary heard his prayer. He died on the morning of her feast. Mary herself came to bring him with her to Heaven. Beloved in Christ, you may ask:

What filled the heart of St. Stanislaus with such great longing to see Mary in heaven? It may be worth our while to-day to answer this question.

O Mary, Mother of fair love, crowned Queen of Heaven, may our longing to see you in Heaven so sanctify our lives that we may at an early day celebrate with St. Stanislaus the feast of your Assumption!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, for the greater glory of God!

St. Stanislaus longed for heaven. Great saint, we share that desire! Many are the reasons which inspire us with disgust for this world and excite in us a longing for heaven.

First, in regard to the exterior world in general and the life which we live, many long and weary years has the earth groaned under the curse of sin. There are indeed here below, even after the gates of Paradise are closed against us, many beautiful countries; but all men can not live there, and those who do, grow accustomed to the beauty which surrounds them and find it monotonous and tame.

Oh, how I long to behold the delights of the Lord in the country of the living—to behold what a God Who is infinite Beauty and Blessedness, and at the same time omnipotent, is able to create!

Here on earth are men who, though wide tracts of land lie unused, can not call one foot of ground their own.

O Mary, I long to leave this inhospitable country to enter heaven, there to exclaim: "Heaven is mine! All is mine!"

Here, according to the curse pronounced on man—"In the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat thy bread"—he is obliged to earn his bread by weary toil, for that curse is fulfilled in every one to a greater or less degree.

O Mary, I desire to go home to heaven! Here is labor—there is reward; here is toil—there is rest; here is anxiety—there is peace. Here is one constant vicissitude—to-day rich, to-morrow poor; to-day in health, to-morrow in sickness; to-day honored, to-morrow despised; to-day flattered, to-morrow persecuted; to-day it is life, to-morrow *death*.

In heaven we find *rest* eternal and perpetual *joy*. Oh, how I yearn to go to heaven! Here all is perishable—there all is eternal; here is suffering—there is rejoicing.

With what perfect justice, no doubt, could Job exclaim: "Man, born of a woman, liveth but a short time, and is filled with many miseries."

How many thorns of suffering spring up in life from the one single care to provide for one's self and family! Often, with the most willing heart to labor, a person can even find no employment.

To this are added innumerable painful sicknesses, and finally death. Oh, I long to leave this world to go to heaven, where, for ever and ever, no shadow of trouble can ever fall—no rain, no hunger, no thirst,

no misery afflict the body—no separation distresses the soul; where no tears are shed; where there is naught but joy—eternal joy.

If we regard the society and the intercourse of men on earth, what a longing after heaven stirs up the heart of man!

Oh, what terrible wickedness, servility, and malice, what falsehood and treachery, are found among men in this valley of tears!

In heaven there is only the Communion of Saints.

Oh, I desire to leave this sink of moral corruption to enter the society of Angels and Saints—to fly from the company of creatures and enjoy an endless union with God Himself!

As long as I live on earth I live in danger of offending God. In heaven it will be impossible for me to commit sin. Oh, thrice happy impossibility! Mary, I desire to leave this world to go to heaven!

If there were no other motive, this alone would be sufficient for a soul inflamed with love of God to long continually for heaven, where never a shadow of temptation or imperfection is to be found, where to displease God is an impossibility.

The misery of this world and the happiness of the next was the daily subject of meditation for St. Stanislaus; hence his longing for the abode of the blessed.

But apart from all these motives, there is, for the child of Mary, one motive which, in the abstract, is alone powerful enough to nourish daily—yes, hourly—in our hearts the desire of Heaven. It is the wish to

behold there this dear Mother, to offer her our thanks, and to share her beatitude forever.

It was, above all others, this motive which so inflamed the heart of St. Stanislaus that it dissolved the fetters which held him to earth, and set him free to fly to heaven on this lovely feast so dear to the hearts of Mary's devoted children.

Oh, how many reasons have we to long with St. Stanislaus for heaven! For if its general magnificence is so indescribably ravishing, and each dwelling there, each throne, each crown so resplendent with unfading glory, how magnificently will not the mansion, the palace, the throne, the crown shine forth which God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, have prepared for the Queen of heaven!

Oh, that I, too, might soon with St. Stanislaus behold them in all their beauty!

Heaven is the kingdom of *reward*, with which nothing earthly can be compared. "Eye hath not seen nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive what God has prepared for His lovers."

And as to Mary, each act of hers surpasses in merit those of the saints and angels. They are the jewels on her heavenly attire, the gems on her celestial crown.

It is your happy lot, St. Stanislaus, to gaze upon Mary to-day. Oh, that I too, ere long, may behold her there with you! I long to see Mary, as the mirror of justice, in the abundance of merit which distinguished her, which, from the beginning with her Immaculate

Conception, augmented to the day on which her stainless soul departed this life.

I long to see her, to salute her, to thank God with and through her for her great glory and pre-election, and at the same time to see all the graces which she has obtained for me from Him, as the Mother of mercy, as Mother of divine grace. How much I am indebted to her intercession and solicitude for the rescue and sanctification of my soul!

Indeed, I long to enter heaven and to present to Mary my affectionate homage and veneration, my gratitude and love. Only in heaven can this be done to the entire satisfaction of my heart. Here in the land of my exile I can only thank her from afar, surrounded by the assaults of the enemy of salvation—there I will thank her as her rescued child; and not alone my thanks will be offered, for with them will go the ardent gratitude of the whole celestial host.

A heart penetrated with gratitude to God invites, as the Psalmist admonishes us, every creature in heaven and on earth to laud, praise, and thank God. The same may be justly said of our gratitude to Mary the Mother of God.

Oh, what a motive to sigh after heaven with the fervent ardor which glowed in the heart of St. Stanislaus! What a joy and privilege, in the company of the Angels and Saints, to laud, praise, and thank Mary!

St. Stanislaus, the Holy Ghost moved thee to direct thy petition to Mary, because that divine Spirit chose thee as a model for youth. We, on the contrary, call

upon thee to obtain for us through her the grace to celebrate yet often, but always in a more worthy manner, the Feast of her Assumption on earth, until we shall be called from this land of exile to celebrate with thee in heaven this happy feast, and with all the Angels and Saints rejoice in the possibly highest degree thereat.—Amen!

FEAST OF THE NATIVITY OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

FIRST SERMON.

“Who is she that cometh forth as the morning rising?”—Cant. vi, 9.

CHRIST calls Himself the light of the world, and such, in truth, He is. The Church terms Him the Sun of Justice, and calls Mary blessed, because from her sprung this Sun that came to illumine the world.

She is, therefore, justly styled the Dawn of Morn, announcing, by her happy birth, the coming of the Sun.

For four thousand years the gloom, occasioned by the fall of Adam, lay brooding over man. For four thousand years man sighed for the coming of the Redeemer; and who can tell the storms and trials that befell him during this long period of time? But the day dawned that gave birth and life to the Mother of this Redeemer. Ah, happy day! Though it was not hers to free us from our bonds, and draw us out of the depth of misery into which sin had cast us, yet hers it was to foretell the advent of the Saviour, even as the morning dawn foretells the light of day.

The very first appearance of the dawn warns us that the sun will soon follow, bringing with him light and growth, and sustenance and life. So did the birth

of our Lady proclaim, to those who lived in pious expectation, the coming of the Messiah.

Let us consider to-day the prayer of the Church:

"Thy birth hath brought joy unto the whole world, because, out of thee, there came forth the Sun of Justice, Christ our Lord and God."

Mary, bless especially this day thy rejoicing children!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, for the greater honor and glory of God!

Who has not felt his heart calmed and cheered at beholding that beautiful phenomenon of nature—the Aurora! How soothing a sight especially it is to one who has passed a long and fearful night, where pain and dread and danger left him no rest, but has reason to hope that the day will relieve all this pain and misery!

And so it is with us when we behold, with loving trust, the child that is born unto us this day. The words addressed to the shepherds at the birth of our Saviour—"I bring you good tidings of great joy, for this day is born to you a Saviour"—are applicable to the child that is born this day. The Angel could have addressed us in almost the same terms: I bring you good tidings of great joy, for this day is born unto you Mary, the Mother of the Redeemer. Yet a few years, and there will come forth from her blessed womb Christ Jesus, the Sun of Justice, Who will dis-

pel the darkness of sin that has overtaken the children of men. He will turn night into day; yea, into a day of happy and celestial light!

How great is the joy of the royal heir when, after having lost his claims to the throne, he beholds the morn that will reinstate him in his rights, and make him the ruler of a yet mightier kingdom.

Such, my brethren, is our happy lot through Christ, Who is the Light of the world. He is to make us children of God; to make us happy in calling God our Father; to make us lawful heirs of heaven,—heirs far richer than we would have been had we never lost our inheritance. Oh, let us return thanks to God, and hail with fairest greeting the child that is to be the Mother of such a God and Benefactor!

Take the case of an unfortunate man, who, though once rich, is now leading a wretched life. He is suddenly surprised with the news, that on a fixed day he is to regain all his wealth with twofold interest. That day is now dawning; and, oh, how its first appearance in the Eastern skies thrills his soul with joy!

Dear brethren, you remember how sin has robbed us of every thing; but you, likewise, remember that Christ has made us partakers of the superabundance of His grace, and obtained for us the means of obtaining merits for His kingdom of glory. Mary's nativity announces the approach of this eventful day. Rejoice, therefore, and be glad!

A sick man spends a sleepless night. He is suffer-

ing from a painful malady. However, there is hope for him. The physician tells him that on such a day, fixing the precise date, he will be cured. That day is now advancing; already its first glimmerings appear in the horizon. He raises himself from his bed, and hails the light of the looked-for day.

Beloved brethren, we all have been wounded by sin, fatally wounded. Christ came to heal our wounds, and to save us from the dangers of eternal death. He shall be to us a means of recovery, perfect recovery; but Mary is as "the morning rising" of the day of our salvation, effected through Christ our Redeemer. It is just, then, that we should celebrate her nativity with festive rejoicings.

A prisoner pines in his dungeon. He is to be freed from prison on a certain day. The dawn of that day is about to break; and, when he catches the first glimpse of the morning light, he cries out: "Hail, happy light; a little longer, and I am free!"

And how much greater should be our happiness to-day! Eternal pains of hunger and thirst were to be our only share! It is sin's share! Our Lord would free us from this misery. By the union which He effected between God and us, we shall be partly satiated in this world, entirely and forever in heaven. Ah, lovely dawn, birth of the Virgin Mother, that announcest our Saviour's coming! And, in very truth, her birth is as the morning dawn, the dawn of freedom; of salvation; of grace; of mental illumination; of fortitude; of consolation, and of happiness eternal.

No more shall darkness obscure our understanding; but bright and clear is the way that leads us on to heaven. No more shall we grow faint and weary in the service of God; in the observance of His laws; in the practice of virtue; in the treading of the path of perfection; but steadfast and strong shall we be in leading an almost angelic life here on earth.

No more shall distress make our hearts fail, but in the splendor of the Gospel Sun we shall see the value of sufferings as reflected from the life and deeds of our Lord; and the ointment of His merits shall be poured into the wounds which hardships, trials, and tribulations have dealt us so severely.

No more shall the thought of approaching death fill us with fear and trembling; but, after looking upon Christ victorious, we shall say, with the Apostle: "O death! where is thy sting?"

And what if our body crumble into dust? Christ says: "I am the Resurrection and the Life, he that believeth in Me, although he be dead, yet shall live."

This, then, is the day which the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad, as holy king David bids us. The nativity of the Blessed Virgin foretells the coming of the Saviour. Hence it is that we celebrate, with such solemnity, this day, which is the precursor of that greatest of days—Christmas.

And may we endeavor to reap benefits from this feast by resolving so firmly to imitate her that to-day's celebration may be the beginning of the long and blissful day that awaits her faithful followers.

Let us remember, too, that we are not to rest satisfied in mere empty rejoicings; but that we should meditate on the various events of her life, that we may be led on to, and strengthened in, the resolve to imitate her, and so to grow in age and wisdom before God and men.—Amen!

SECOND SERMON.

“What an one, think ye, shall this child be?”—Luke i, 66.

WHEN St. John, the precursor of our Lord, first saw the light of day, and when his father's tongue was loosed, as he wrote the name of the child, people wondered and said: “What an one, think ye, shall this child be? For the hand of the Lord was with him.”

This child was to be the forerunner of our Lord, of Him who is to be the Saviour of the world, to prepare for Him a way by which to enter the hearts of the children of men. Had the neighbors, when they first saw the child, but known his high vocation, they would have had every reason to congratulate him, and to be glad over his birth. I shall apply this text: “What an one, think ye, shall this child be?” to the birth of the Blessed Virgin, the Mother of the Incarnate Son of God.

How many and how great reasons should have urged the people, who lived at the time of her birth, to congratulate the child, and to be glad. To them, however, these were not known. But we do know, and we, therefore, celebrate the memory of the happy occurrence of her nativity, as though this were the day on which our Blessed Lady first saw the light of day.

It is in this spirit, as you are well aware, that the

Church celebrates her feasts, and her prayer for to-day's festivity confirms what I have just said.

Be it then to her honor and to our consolation that I ask the question: what child is this that is born to-day? and what shall this child be?

The answer to the two questions shall be the subject of my sermon.

And thou, Mother of God, obtain for us the grace to know thy Dignity and Power, and our hearts will be filled with festive joy!

I speak in the holy name of Jesus, to the greater glory of God!

The chief reason why a whole empire often rejoices at the birth of a child, is because this child is heir or heiress to the throne. Then it is, that days of jubilee are proclaimed throughout the land.

Observe, then, the character of the child that is born to-day. This child is the future Queen of heaven and earth, the Ruler of the powers of Nature, the Mistress, not only of the visible world, but of those spacious realms of glory that loom up with dazzling brilliancy beyond the skies. Yea, more, she is Queen of the Angels, in the order of their choirs,—of Angels, of Archangels, of Dominations, Virtues, Powers, Thrones, Principalities, Seraphim, and Cherubim. All the Choirs of Angels are hovering around the cradle of this child, and pay homage to their Queen.

Yet, even now, at the first moment of her life, this

child is full of grace, surpassing, by the splendor of her virtues, all the Choirs of Angels who may justly exclaim in their bewilderment of joy: "Who is she, fair as the moon, bright as the sun, the one chosen Mother of the Son of God?" Already in her mother's womb she was endowed with the full use of reason, so that with every breath she could gain merits that surpassed those of the angels and saints, and these merits would go on increasing to the end of her life. What a glorious spectacle for the Angels to behold this child! and her name should be *Mary*, which signifies—the sea.

It was not without a special intervention of heaven that St. Joachim and St. Anna gave the child of grace this name. For as all the waters of the rivers flow into the sea, and the sea majestically flows over them all, so should every grace which God ever granted to Angels and Saints, and will ever grant them to the end of time, flow into the heart of Mary, and be inundated with the fullness of her grace. Yet, what do I say: this Child is pleasing in the sight of Angels. Rather let us consider, with what complacency the Blessed Trinity looks upon this Child.

"This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased," thus resounded the voice of the heavenly Father on Mount Tabor. And to-day the voice of that same Father is heard over the cradle of the Blessed Virgin: "This is My beloved daughter, in whom I am well pleased." And the voice of the Son re-echoes: "This is My Mother, whom I have chosen

from eternity, and in whom I am well pleased." Beneath her heart I shall soon rest as God and man; shall first take substance from her. Her I shall afterwards embrace as My Mother, honor as my Mother, and glorify as My Mother. "This is My beloved spouse whom I have chosen from eternity, and in whom I am well pleased, My only spouse, immaculate." Such are the words spoken by the Holy Ghost. And had a prophet been present at her birth, as at that of St. John, what might his prophecies have been? We know, for even then all that Scripture and tradition said of her dignity power, sanctity, and glory was fulfilled.

This child—such might have been the words of the Prophet—this child when scarcely three years of age shall consecrate herself, body and soul, to God in the temple. This child, as the virgin spouse of St. Joseph, shall receive the Angel's salutation, and become the Mother of the Son of God. Being Mother to the Son of God, she shall nourish and nurse Him, live with Him for thirty years under the same roof, shall daily have His most holy example before her eyes; and, like Him, grow in age and wisdom and grace before God and men. She shall accompany Him on His apostolic journeys, hear His divine word, and witness all the wonders that He will work. She shall hear the cry of the people: "Blessed the womb that bore thee, and the paps that gave thee suck." And when the hour comes in which He will end the sacrifice of redemption on the cross, this child shall stand at the foot of the Cross as Co-redemptrix, and there she shall

hear the words of her dying Son: Woman, behold thy Son!

She shall remain on earth in the midst of the Apostles as their Queen, and as protectress of the Church, until saints of every rank shall have preceded her to heaven, and be ready to render her entry glorious. This child, when it shall have shone as the Mirror of Justice on earth, shall be taken, body and soul, glorified into Heaven.

Oh, what a day of triumph this shall be, when Christ shall embrace her as His Mother, lead her to her throne, where she remains seated forever, and enjoys the bliss and glory of her Divine Son. There she will entone that "*Magnificat*," which once on earth she sang in such rapturous tones of thanksgiving. There she will be our intercessor with Christ, recommending to Him each of her children, and showing herself the Mother of grace and of mercy, the refuge of sinners, the consoler of the afflicted, the restorer of the sick, our only hope after Christ our Lord.

The whole of Christendom, from its first beginning, and down through all succeeding ages, honored our Lady under all these titles. How many are the examples and witnesses that go to establish grounds for which the Church greets her with these titles, and that prove how accurately were fulfilled the words of the Queen of Prophets: "From henceforth all generations shall call me blessed!"

Let us think especially of the many shrines erected in her honor throughout Christendom, and of the en-

thusiasm with which Catholics fifteen hundred years ago received the decree of the Council of Ephesus, declaring that Mary is the Mother of God, and is to be honored and praised and venerated as such. Coming to our own days, think of the ever-memorable year 1854, in which Pius IX. published the declaration that Mary was conceived without stain, exempt from the defilement of original sin. Then it was that the "Te Deum" resounded over the length and breadth of the earth. Look at the many shrines in Europe, where faith has fructified for nineteen hundred years. There is scarcely a province in which Catholics do not assemble at some shrine, and where we do not see countless memorials kept to testify that Mary has proven herself to be the refuge of sinners, the restorer of the sick, the help of Christians. But still more impressive and still more consoling it is for us, her children, to glance into the sanctuary of our own hearts, to look back upon our life-long pilgrimage, and to see how often we ourselves have experienced our dear Mother's help and protection.

Let me ask the sinner: "Who has obtained for you the grace of conversion?" Oh, it is Mary! I cried to her for help. To her I owe this grace. And who, O grief-stricken soul! was it that consoled you when your father, mother, husband, or child were snatched away from you by death? You sought relief from Mary. She consoled you. And to whom do you acknowledge your thanks for the recovery from this or that sickness, for the rescue from this or that danger? You

took refuge to Mary. She stood by you. Who is it that will be your consolation and hope on your death-bed? It is Mary, the Mother of a happy death.

And may she be such to us in truth. May she, by her assistance, complete, even unto the salvation of our souls, the work of grace begun in us, in order that we, who have presented our hearty congratulations at her cradle, may behold her throne of glory, and that when, through death, we shall be reborn unto life eternal, departing this world under her guidance and protection, we may forever share her happiness in heaven. Amen!

THIRD SERMON.

“Thy birth, O Virgin Mother of God, has given joy to the whole world; because of thee was born Christ, the Sun of Justice, Who, taking away the curse, hath brought us blessing, and, conquering death, hath bestowed on us life eternal.”—Anthem of the Holy Church.

“**T**HY birth, O Virgin Mother of God, has given joy to the whole world; because of thee was born Christ, the Sun of Justice, Who, taking away the curse, hath brought us blessing, and, conquering death, hath bestowed on us life eternal.”

These are the joyous words which the Church uses at the Vespers of this day; and these words form, as it were, the key-note of all the prayers and hymns with which to-day's liturgy is embellished.

Had Mary been the daughter of the greatest ruler of the world, think you, my brethren, that we would remember her to-day? No; long since her memory would have passed from the minds of men. How few are the daughters of great princes of whose birth even mention is made after the lapse of centuries! Such would have been the case with Mary, the royal child of the family of David. However, she brought forth Christ, the promised Messiah, the Saviour of the world, the God-man.

Mothers of great men, of men that have done great things in the world, are praised as long as their sons are praised. This is the case with mothers of great rulers, great philosophers, great saints.

Mary was to take part in the work of redemption;

this is the reason why the faithful, wherever they are found, look upon Mary with so great a devotion, and reverence and hail her birth as the harbinger of good tidings.

Let us, then, consider to-day, on the one hand, the curse which rested on mankind since the fall of Adam; and, on the other, the blessing which Christ brought, and in which Mary took part.

O Mary, obtain for us the blessing of thy holy nativity, in order that we may fulfill the duties of our state of life as redeemed children of God!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, to the greater glory of God!

Wishing to know the nature of the curse which weighed down mankind since the fall of Adam, we must first consider man before the fall, in his original justice and happiness; and then we must examine him after the fall, in his subjection to Satan and misery.

Adam and Eve, our first parents, awoke in paradise, enriched with all the gifts of nature and grace in order to begin a heavenly life even on earth. Their reason was enlightened with so much knowledge that our minds can not form an adequate idea of it. This is proved from Holy Writ.

Through sin this light, this knowledge, was lost to mankind. What night, thick and impenetrable, even in natural things, fell upon our race! Witness the

savages, the cannibals, and see how among them, not only the knowledge of God and the science of salvation, but even the first ideas of right and wrong, have, in regard to many, almost disappeared.

Besides, we must bear in mind that the will of man has been very much weakened as regards the practice of virtue. The heathens adored, and even yet adore, their very vices. What did they gain by so unreasonable a manner of acting? Anguish of heart, heightened to despair, urged them to take away their own life!

Again, how many and how great have been and are the cares of man to provide for his bodily sustenance! How literally has the curse of God been fulfilled, saying to Adam: "The earth shall bring forth thorns and thistles, and in the sweat of thy brow thou shalt eat thy bread!" And to Eve: "I will multiply thy sorrows, and in sorrow thou shalt bring forth thy children!"

It is with good reason, then, that we call this earth, cursed as it is since the fall, a valley of tears. A great change, however, has taken place since the coming of Christ for all those that have faith and live by their faith. Who can form a just estimate of the knowledge by faith concerning eternal truths which our race acquired through the coming of the Saviour?

Now we see clearly and distinctly the way which we must walk; we believe truths so consoling at once, and so sublime, that even Adam himself, in his primitive justice, could not have imagined so much con-

descension on the part of God, and so much elevation on the part of man.

Now we believe that God has become man; we confess, as children of an infallible Church, truths which point to an eternity—an eternity far more blissful than we could have expected or obtained had Adam not listened to the tempter.

Again, we behold in the light of faith many blessings bestowed on us even while on earth—graces obtained by prayer, graces obtained through the intercession of friends, of Angels, and Saints; but, above all, graces obtained through the Sacraments, and especially through the Holy Eucharist. With all this the Blessed Virgin is most intimately connected.

For you must know that to Mary belongs the title of Protectress of our faith. “Thou alone,” says the Church in one of her prayers to Mary, “hast conquered all heresies.” She it is who preserves and enlivens the faith in the hearts of the true children of the Church; she it is who incites us to a faith made living by prayer and good works.

What the experience of ages teaches can not be called in question. But this experience teaches us, that in proportion as the devotion of nations and families and individuals to Mary is increased, in the same proportion liveliness of faith, true piety and perseverance in good works are increased.

Through the curse of sin our will has become weak; but, through the grace of Christ, our will has again become strong.

The grace of Christ enables us, not only to obey the strict law of God,—for even in the Old Testament there was sufficient grace to do that,—but also to do more: To walk in the way of the Evangelical Counsels, and thereby live the life of angels, though still detained in our houses of clay here on earth.

And although for the practice of this sublime degree of perfection extraordinary graces are necessary, these graces are not wanting; for Mary will obtain them for her children, partly through her intercession with Christ, and partly through the encouragement in virtue which the example of her life gives to the faithful.

And these extraordinary graces have been efficacious with millions upon millions! By how far, think you, do the saints nowadays scattered all over the earth exceed in number those of the old law? Let us recall to mind the lives of the saints! What do we find in them? We find that as star differeth from star, so saint from saint. Still they have one trait in common. All cherished a special devotion to the Blessed Virgin. The same may be said of those multitudes of faithful whose lives and virtues, though hidden and unnoticed of the world, are, nevertheless, conspicuous for an ardent devotion to the Mother of God. All Catholic nations and countries and peoples bear witness to what I say.

Man has lost, it is true, the paradise of pleasure and delight; and, in its place, we are living in a valley of tears, our minds are surrounded by doubt and

ignorance, and our hearts are pressed down by anguish, restlessness and sorrow. But Christ has turned this our night of sorrow into a day of consolation. How has He done this? By redeeming the world through His sufferings and death. For now, illumined as we are by faith, we know and confess that nothing is so well calculated to increase our portion of heavenly glory as trials and sufferings accepted and borne with resignation to the most holy will of God.

But Mary, the comforter of the afflicted, the help of Christians, she it is to whom we have recourse, especially in our temporal necessities, in order that, through her intercession, the Lord may free us from them, or lessen their severity; or else, that He may give us patience to bear them meritoriously. The mere name of Mary, pronounced with confidence, acts as a balm upon our wounded hearts, and imparts a certain sweetness to our very sufferings. That I do not exaggerate, I appeal to the experience of every Christian soul here present that, in days of tribulation, has had recourse to her.

Again, who is there that, contemplating Mary, the Queen of Martyrs, at the foot of the cross, does not feel in himself an increase of patience in suffering, and even a desire to kiss the hand of God that strikes him.

However, losses in the natural order are as nothing when compared to those of the supernatural order.

Adam, in his original justice, was not only created to the image and likeness of God, but he had also

been raised to divine sonship—a sonship of adoption, it is true; but, as son—as child of God—he was destined one day to be a sharer of God's own beatitude.

Sin robbed our first father, and, in him, ourselves, of this high destiny, of this God-like elevation of our nature. What a loss! Yet, again, what a gain! Through the coming of Christ this divine sonship of adoption has been recovered by us; and, what is more, the natural, only Son of God the Father, has become a Son of Adam, of David, and, consequently, He has become our *Brother*—an honor which was not given to the Angels.

Mary is the chosen Mother of the new law, as Eve had been of the old. Mary is the Mother of all men in the kingdom of Christ, as Eve is the mother of all according to the flesh.

The sin of Adam brought death into the world, and opened the gates of destruction for soul and body; Christ's redemption brought life for the soul immediately, and for the body on the day of the glorious resurrection. Mary has preceded us to heaven. Soul and body, she thrones there as Queen of Angels and Saints. There she awaits our coming.

Think of this, child of the Church, and rejoice to-day, with all the faithful, at the birth of the Redeemer's Mother.—Amen!

FEAST OF THE HOLY ROSARY.

FIRST SERMON.

“I was as a rose-plant.”—Eccl. xxiv, 18.

IN various passages of the Old and New Testaments we find prayer compared to a sweet odor rising before the throne of God. And referring to the faithful spouse of the Holy Ghost, Sacred Scripture calls her a rose-plant. This appellation recalls to our mind that method by which we frequently invoke and honor the blessed Mother of God: it reminds us of the holy Rosary. Every Catholic is sufficiently well acquainted with the manner in which this beautiful devotion is performed.

It consists in this: that whilst saying the Our Father and Hail Mary, we meditate on the mysteries of our holy faith, which, if duly considered and dwelt upon, will draw from the heart the sweet odor of pious emotions.

To-day I wish to speak of those emotions of the soul which mostly determine the efficacy of the devotion of the *holy Rosary*; of the emotions which render prayer agreeable to Mary, acceptable before God, and greatly conducive to our own sanctification.

If, in reciting the Rosary, we do not reflect at all, or only carelessly, on the mysteries of our holy faith, we may be assured that we do not pray except with our lips, and that such a prayer will be to us of no or of but little avail. And yet, of all prayers, that of the Rosary is most likely to degenerate into a mere mechanical recital of words, on account of the constant repetition of the same forms. •

It is evident, then, that, in order to perform this beautiful devotion to the Blessed Virgin well, we must occupy our mind with the truths of our holy faith.

Now, the mysteries on which we meditate whilst reciting the Rosary, are, according to the events which they call to our mind, divided into the *joyful*, the *sorrowful*, and the *glorious* mysteries.

To-day we shall consider the sweet-scenting roses of the joyful mysteries.

O Mary, mystical Rose, as Holy Church calleth thee, would that as often as we perform the beautiful devotion of the Rosary, it might ascend to thy heavenly throne as a perfumed offering of thy devoted children!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, for the greater glory of God!

“The Conception by the Holy Ghost.” This is the first event pondered over in commemorating the joyful mysteries. These words refer to the fundamental mystery of our holy faith in the order of salvation and

redemption of mankind. They refer to the *Incarnation* of the Son of God in the womb of the Virgin Mary.

The emotions of the soul which are stirred up within us and ascend towards heaven as the perfume of roses, at the mentioning of this mystery, are those of thankfulness for the infinite mercy which the Almighty was pleased to show to the unhappy race of Adam. Indeed, it was an act of mercy which was shown not even to the Angels. They fell, and are lost forever. But to fallen man the infinitely merciful God stretched forth His saving arm, wishing to celebrate in the salvation of our race the triumph of His mercy.

What else would be the sentiments of our souls, at the thought of such marvelous clemency, but those of *thanksgiving*? But at the same time we must not forget to encourage ourselves to lead such a life as will entitle us to participate in the privileges of Redemption. For certainly the state of a redeemed, and yet lost soul, would be much more miserable than that of a fallen Angel, to whom mercy has never been extended.

But, in order to secure to ourselves the merit of Redemption, let us be close imitators of the virtues of Mary. Especially let us imitate her profound humility and her unshaken conformity in the most holy will of God, so beautifully expressed in those words addressed by her to the angel at Nazareth: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done unto me according to thy word."

Oh, yes, if we recite the first decade of the joyful

mysteries in sentiments like these; if we renew the good resolution to show our thankfulness for the grace of Redemption, principally by living a pure and holy life, and wishing that nothing but the will of God may be fulfilled in us, then surely our prayer will ascend to the throne of heaven as sweet and agreeable as the perfume of the most odoriferous roses.

“The *Visitation* of our Lady to her cousin Elizabeth.” The Visitation of Mary bespeaks her active virtue of charity towards her fellow-creatures. And the holy emotions that, like fragrant roses, will spring up in our souls at the thought of Mary’s example of *charity*, will be the resolutions to thank God for the grace of Redemption by a true and active charity toward our neighbor.

Though, as children of the same Adam, we are already brothers and sisters, and are bound to contribute to each other’s happiness, yet how much more urgent has not this duty become on every one of us since the Son of God became man and has called every man His brother! How much more are we not bound to live in harmony and peace with our fellow-men, now that we are destined to be the children of the same Church on earth and to enjoy eternal bliss together in heaven! And looking up to Mary, our resolution of a mutual, lively charity must surely be increased, since, through Jesus Christ, she has become the Eve of the New Testament, and thus the spiritual Mother of all the children of God.

But, in order to fulfill the commandment of charity

to its full extent, we must diligently consider those very virtues which Mary practised when visiting Elizabeth. Mary, namely, though she was at that time already clothed with the dignity of Mother of the Incarnate Son of God, *hastened* to Elizabeth in order to perform for her the offices of a servant. She hastened, and joyfully overcame the difficulties of the road.

Thus, then, according to the example of Mary we must help our neighbor in the spirit of self-sacrifice, speedily and lovingly; we must administer to his bodily as well as spiritual wants.

Mary helps her cousin Elizabeth, and John is delivered by the very presence of the Mother of God, from the stain of original sin, and sanctified as the precursor of the coming Messiah.

Oh, yes, such holy emotions of fraternal charity rise up to heaven, agreeable to God as the perfume of roses, and consoling to the maternal heart of Mary.

“The *birth* of our Lord in the stable at Bethlehem.” We must *follow* Jesus if we wish to live as children of our heavenly Father, in charity with God and man.

“Follow Me.” In these words Christ addresses Himself to every human soul. The virtues, however, which Christ our Model wants us to imitate, are those which were practised by him as a child in the manger.

There lies the Incarnate Son of God, annihilated in the guise of a helpless babe, poor, trembling, and sacrificing Himself for the Redemption of mankind.

How eloquently does not this example speak to our soul! If you wish to *follow* Me, the God-Man says to us, humble yourselves and be willing to receive humiliations, as I did at Bethlehem when rejected from the doors of its inhabitants.

Indeed, without humility there can be no true virtue, no solid foundation of piety, no increase of grace, no certainty of salvation.

If you wish to follow Me, look at Me in the manger; there I lie, poor and helpless. Free, then, your heart from the gross cares for this world, from the harassing thoughts of riches and possessions. "Blessed are the poor in spirit." Thus the divine Child speaks to us by its example from the hard bed of straw. Be not solicitous about the coming day. "Give us this day our daily bread." Are not cares for riches the thorns that choke within our soul the divine word of God?

The firm determination of freeing ourselves from all desires after earthly riches, will surely ascend to the throne of God as a sweet fragrance of spiritual roses, whilst the harassing cares for the things of this world will hover below as the foul odor of sin. And again, how much will we not be encouraged by a glance at the Blessed Virgin, who offered up for herself and the Child Jesus the offering of the poor!

"The *offering* of the Infant Jesus in the temple." Such a life is indeed a victory over self, and inseparable from the spirit of *sacrifice*.

If we are animated with a sincere and earnest desire of following in the footsteps of Jesus, we must deny

ourselves, take the cross upon our shoulders, and place ourselves with eagerness under the banner of the holy cross—under the banner of Christ, Who, as Simeon predicted, shall be a sign of contradiction to many.

We must, furthermore, sanctify our life in patience, and purify our intentions ever more and more.

All for Jesus! We must be ready to accept every thing with a willing heart, in union with the divine heart of Jesus. And whatever may be the opinion of the world, let us not heed it, but do what Jesus desires us to do, in order to follow His divine example.

If we say the Rosary, animated with such sentiments against the world and its desires, our prayer will be as blooming roses in the sight of the Almighty. Filled with this resolution against the spirit of the world, Mary led a retired life at Nazareth till Jesus was about to accomplish the sacrifice of the redemption of mankind. For then she came forth, but only to place herself beneath the cross, whence alone we can draw salvation and eternal happiness.

“The *finding* in the temple.” Though a soul may determine to despise the maxims of the world, to devote herself to the service of God and to follow her Jesus, still the time may and will come when she will be assailed by temptations to sin and lukewarmness. And what remains to be done if she should have the misfortune of yielding to sin, and thus separating herself from her Spouse? The soul must return in sorrow and repentance, and must, moreover, draw good from evil by determining to regain lost grace, and to be

more watchful in future against the snares of the evil one.

Here the roses that exhale their sweet odor before the Most High are the sentiments of repentance over our shortcomings and imperfections, and particularly over the grievous sins which we may have committed during the past.

Now, concerning contrition, what remarkable things do we not read in the "Lives of the Saints"! Not a few of them led a life of the most rigorous penance for a single venial sin or a mere imperfection. Sorrow for past sins will be particularly salutary for the soul, as it strengthens the foundation of all virtues—humility—and increases patience, a virtue so necessary for final perseverance in the service of the Almighty.

But, that in truth our prayer may rise up to God, agreeable as the fragrance of roses, we must, before beginning the prayer, make the good intention of meditating in true recollection of spirit on the mysteries prescribed.

And it is especially to the devotion of the Rosary that the admonition of the Holy Ghost has reference when He says: "Before prayer prepare thy heart."

Observe well this counsel, O child of Mary, and the roses that will spring up whilst reciting the beads will change themselves into precious gems to adorn the crown that is awaiting you in heaven!—Amen!

SECOND SERMON.

“According to the multitude of my sorrows in my heart, thy comforts have given joy to my soul.”—Ps. xciii, 19.

IN Holy Writ true prayer is often compared to a sweet odor or fragrant incense, rising before the throne of the Most High. But this comparison holds good only for prayer, which is animated with sentiments of adoration and praise, and thanksgiving and love.

Now the prayer, which is most generally said by all Catholics on the face of the earth, and in whose commemoration a special feast has been instituted, is that of the holy Rosary.

Last year we considered together with what sentiments and emotions we should be animated when reflecting on the joyful mysteries.

And we found, as you will remember, that the mysteries of this part of the Rosary have reference, principally, to the maxims of the Christian's daily life in the service of the Almighty.

But this, our daily life, passed in sweet and peaceful union with God, is often interrupted by bitter sufferings and direful adversities. And in order that we may bear patiently and meritoriously the ills of life, it will not suffice only to contemplate the ordinary life of Christ, but we must also often turn our thoughts to the sacred passion and death of our divine Redeemer. Such salutary thoughts are stirred up within

our hearts by reciting the Rosary and meditating on the sorrowful mysteries.

There is nothing more meritorious, and nothing more agreeable, in the sight of God, than a perfect resignation to His will in times of adversity.

Let us, then, consider to-day what fragrant roses of pious emotions will spring up in our hearts while meditating the sorrowful mysteries—roses that will exhale their sweet odor before the throne of Jesus and Mary!

Mother of dolors, would that every pair of beads commemorating the sorrowful mysteries, were to thee a bunch of roses laden with the perfume of a true love of the cross of thy Jesus!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, to the greater glory of God!

“The sweating of blood.” The particular suffering of our Lord which excites us most to *compassion*, is His anguish in the garden of Olives.

Every soul that in spirit contemplates Jesus sweating blood, must say within itself: It is for me that Christ sweats blood, through fear that, notwithstanding His passion, to which He subjected Himself for me, I might yet yield to temptation and perish. I say: for *me*. Jesus came down upon earth for the redemption of the soul of every man, and He offered up His sufferings for each particular human being, as though each one had been the only object of His sufferings.

Yes, if in this manner we consider the bitter passion of our Lord, its recollection will move our hearts most effectually, and produce in it corresponding emotions of sorrow and repentance.

Now, whilst recalling the bloody sweat, and, in general, the mysteries of the passion, as the Rosary presents them to our mind, it is highly important and beneficial to contemplate, in spirit, the Redeemer in His sufferings, that our heart may be filled with compassion, and that we may be moved to ask ourselves: O, my Jesus, what can I do in order to console Thee?

According to St. Luke, Christ fell three times to the ground. He grew pale, trembled, and prayed: "Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from Me," and the blood oozed from His veins, moistened His garment, and flowed upon the ground.

What a sorrowful sight for every soul that loves Jesus!

The uppermost thought here is the question: "What was it that afflicted our Lord thus unto death?" Ah, as I said above, it was the thought of the innumerable risks and dangers to which our final salvation is exposed, and which may render fruitless for us His passion and death.

Console the Lord by your promise to avoid, as much as you can, every occasion of sin, and to make use of the means which Holy Church offers us to overcome every *temptation* as soon as it manifests itself.

Oh, how agreeable will not such resolutions be to the sorrowful heart of our Lord and that of His blessed Mother!

But you must prove the sincerity of this your intention by adhering faithfully to your resolution, especially on the day on which you say your Rosary.

“The flagellation at the pillar.” This scene, too, in the Passion of our Lord, is very apt to fill our hearts with great compassion.

Contemplate thy Jesus, and see how He is lacerated to the very bones; how, bathed in His own blood, He falls to the ground, and breaks forth in the sorrowing words of the prophet: “I am a worm, and no man.” Here, again, the question rises within our soul: What was it, O Lord, that lacerated thee? The answer is: It is the countless number of sins committed by the human race. What a countless number of lashes had He to suffer from them!

Reflect on your own sins. Who could count all those sins of thought, word, desire, action, and omission which you have already committed?

And what shall we say if we consider how many sins are committed every moment, how long this wickedness has already lasted, and how long it may still continue? Console the Lord, and protest, with a firm resolution, that henceforth you will nevermore commit a deliberate sin; that you will even try, with all your heart, to avoid every imperfection, and, moreover, *hinder others* as much as possible from offending Him.

And you will accomplish this latter part first by giving others no occasion of sin, and, secondly, by using every opportunity to lead heretics and infidels to the road of salvation, the Holy Church of God. And more yet, to do all in our power that the children of the Church themselves may not sin, but walk in holiness and humility before the Almighty.

With such emotions fill your heart at the thought of our Lord's flagellation, and the sweetest fragrance will rise from these roses of compassion and zeal for souls, a consolation to the divine heart of Jesus and the sorrowful heart of Mary.

"The crowning with thorns." Contemplate in spirit your God and Lord as He was presented by Pilate to the Jews, crowned with thorns, clothed, by way of mockery, with a purple garment, and bearing a reed in His hand. Listen to the cries of the bloodthirsty crowd: "Crucify Him; crucify Him." Pity your derided Jesus.

Christ looks at the people, for whom He has done so much good; He looks at the whole human race, whom He came to save, and He feels most painfully the insults that are heaped upon Him by the children of His Church. He is particularly afflicted on account of the inconstancy of those who, purified by the waters of baptism, walked for a time in the path of virtue, but fell back again into sin, and thus plunged themselves deeper into the abyss of perdition than if they had never known the grace of Redemption.

Console the Lord by your protestations that you will ever lovingly and faithfully confess Him before man, without being misled by false *human respect*. Certainly such a resolution is of the greatest utility, especially in our times, when all the efforts of the children of the world are directed to the destruction of the Church, and the restoration of ancient heathenism.

Consoling, indeed, and agreeable as the fragrance of roses will such emotions be to the afflicted hearts of Jesus and Mary.

“The carrying of the Cross.” Jesus is pressed to the ground under the burden of the Cross. Consider with what an ardent love for us the Lord embraced the Cross, which was ignominiously laid upon him! He falls under its burden a first, a second, and a third time, until Simon of Cyrene lends Him his assistance, and carries the wood of salvation to Calvary.

Christ permits all this in order to admonish us that without a co-operation on our part His Passion will be of no avail to us, but that in order to participate in the grace of Redemption we must check our bad propensities and firmly resolve to bear, patiently and willingly, the hardships of life for the love of Him. And when the hour of tribulation approaches think of Mary, who, when meeting her divine Son loaded with the cross, did not murmur, but pressed Him to her heart, in perfect conformity to the most holy will of God, whose wish she knew it was, that Christ

should thus suffer in order to reconcile the human race with His heavenly Father.

Protest, before Jesus, that you will unite your sentiments of *conformity* to the most holy will of God with those of Mary, and that you will be ready to bear, willingly, whatever divine Providence may send you for your own sanctification. Oh, how few persons there are who suffer patiently and without murmuring against the providence of God! And for this reason sentiments of patience and perfect resignation in God's most holy will rise up to the Lord and His blessed Mother, with the delicious perfume of the queen of flowers.

"Crucifixion." See your Jesus! The cross is elevated; His wounds gape; the sun disappears from the heavens; the earth trembles; and from the Cross Christ speaketh the words: "Father, forgive them." Every one of His words has reference to the salvation and sanctification of our souls. Consider especially the words: "It is consummated!"

Console the heart of Jesus by protesting that you will follow Him, *with fidelity*, to the end. And, in order that you may do so, turn your thoughts to John under the cross, when Jesus said to him: "Behold thy mother!" And she stood under the cross, her heart filled with compassion, thanksgiving, adoration, and conformity to the most holy will of God. Fall, in spirit, at the feet of Mary, and make the promise of flying to her, as your mother, in all your necessities of body and soul. Try, also, to inspire others

with a great confidence to Mary. If we thus honor her, she will, undoubtedly, become to us a guaranty of final perseverance in the state of grace.

Such sentiments of love and fidelity will certainly exhale a heavenly fragrance before the throne of Jesus and Mary. And since the proverb, "Every day brings its evils," is but too true, it would certainly be most beneficial, for those who meditate on the sorrowful mysteries, to renew their resolution and show themselves particularly patient in their sufferings on the day when they perform this beautiful devotion. And, in order that they may succeed so much the better in their praiseworthy endeavors, let them invoke the help of Mary, saying: O Mary, obtain for me the grace, that when the sword of sorrow shall pierce my soul, I may, in perfect patience and resignation, like thee, follow Jesus, my crucified love.—Amen.

THIRD SERMON.

“And a great sign appeared in heaven: A woman clothed with the sun, and on her head a crown of stars.”—Apoc. xii, 1.

THE Lord loveth a willing heart. This disposition of readiness and alacrity in the service of God is excited within our souls by meditating on the glorious mysteries of the Rosary.

He who serves God from motives of fear and necessity, lacks courage, determination, zeal, and, not seldom, constancy.

But if we consider the mysteries of faith, which refer to the glorious life of Christ and His Blessed Mother, we shall be strengthened and encouraged to suffer, with joy and patience, whatever our holy religion may require of us, calling to mind the words of St. Paul: “If we suffer with the Lord, we shall also be glorified with Him.”

The glorious mysteries, those on which we meditate when reciting the third part of the Rosary, are those of the resurrection of our Lord, His ascension into heaven, the coming of the Holy Ghost, the assumption of our Blessed Lady, and her crowning as Queen of heaven.

And now with regard to these divine truths, we will first consider the events themselves which faith places before our mind, and then reflect on the emotions with which they filled the heart of Mary when

they were being accomplished, in order that we too may be animated with similar thoughts and affections.

And we should strive, moreover, to retain these pious sentiments, not only during the time of prayer, but during the whole course of our life.

We shall then consider to-day the glowing roses which will bloom in our heart, when, in remembrance of Jesus and Mary, we contemplatively recite the Rosary of the glorious mysteries.

O Mary, crowned Queen of heaven, Mother of Christ and our Mother, fill our hearts with an ardent desire of being united to Thee in heaven, in order that we may live on earth in a manner becoming the children of so glorious a Mother!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, to the greater glory of God!

“The resurrection from the dead.” What an encouraging, what a glorious sight! Christ rising from the tomb on Easter-morning, surrounded by myriads of holy angels, and an infinite number of souls, that in the course of four thousand years have sanctified and saved themselves through hope in the coming Messiah, the Saviour of the world.

Mary was the first, as tradition relates, to whom Christ appeared after His resurrection from the dead. What a heavenly joy must it have been for the heart of Mary to see Jesus, Whom she had so bitterly bewailed, once more among the living! With what

an ardent love must she have pressed Him to her maternal heart!

The fruit which we ought to reap from the consideration of this divine mystery is,—a great increase of *faith*. For as St. Paul says : “ Christ is risen, He lives, and, therefore, all His teachings are true.” Christ is risen! Like Him, our prototype, we too shall rise, with a glorified body, radiant as the sun, moving with the ease and swiftness of thought beyond the reach of suffering and death.

But we must also live in a manner becoming men, that profess to follow in the *footsteps* of Christ. And like Jesus we must preserve our heart unsullied from sin, putting off the old man, and clothing ourselves with the new. In order to succeed the better in these, our pious endeavors, let us often turn our thought towards Mary, the most faithful follower of Jesus, who was left upon earth by her divine Son, that she might be a Mirror of Justice to the Apostles and the primitive Christians, as well as to all those who, in the course of time, might be united with them in the one Holy Church of God.

Happy those, O Mary, who saw thee upon earth with the eyes of their body; but happy also those who in spirit look up to thee as their example, and imitate thy virtues!

Oh, how much does not the life of a true child of Mary contribute to the edification and sanctification of others!

“The ascension into heaven.” Let us repair in

spirit to Mount Olivet. How touching the farewell scene which we there behold: The Apostles and disciples of the Lord throw themselves at His feet, in order to receive their Master's blessing before He goes to the Father. But what must have been the feelings of Mary, when Jesus embraced her before His ascension into heaven, where she was soon to meet Him and be united with Him for all eternity!

Throw yourself in spirit at the feet of Jesus and beg His blessing, in order that you too may follow Him one day into life everlasting, and occupy that throne which He has prepared for you in heaven. The constant remembrance of the Ascension of our Lord should excite in every Catholic a longing desire to follow Him soon.

Oh, what a precious fragrance such emotions exhale before the Lord, in a world filled with the foul odor of malice and sin!

"Lift up your heart to the Lord!" thus the priest at the altar admonishes us in the words of St. Paul. If you are risen with Christ, desire the things that are from above. For the difference between the children of the world and those of God consists in this: that the former never think of heaven, whilst the latter desire it most ardently, saying with St. Paul:

"I long to be dissolved and to be with Christ." This great *longing* for *heaven* should excite in us the resolution of often visiting our divine Redeemer in the Most Blessed Sacrament of the altar. For there Christ is yet present as truly and really as He is in

heaven, and as He was on earth with Mary in her house at Nazareth, and as, after His ascension, he remained with her under the sacramental species, which, as we are informed by private revelations of saints, were never consumed in Mary from one Communion to another.

A close union with Christ in the Most Holy Sacrament of the altar, animated by an ardent desire of paying Him frequent visits, of often assisting at the holy sacrifice of the Mass, and especially of frequently and worthily receiving Him in Holy Communion, characterizes the true child of Mary.

These are the thoughts which should occupy our mind when meditating on the second glorious mystery. And if we consider that, notwithstanding His Ascension, our Lord is yet upon earth, let us say to ourselves : What a happiness to be a child of the true Church, and to be so near to our Saviour !

Hail to you, child of Mary, if your heart gives testimony that you live solely for Christ in the Most Holy Sacrament !

You may, in this case, with peace and confidence await the second coming of the Lord—His coming as Judge—which was foretold to the disciples on Mount Olivet by the Angels : “ This Jesus, Whom you have seen ascending into heaven, shall come again.” And you may even now know your sentence from those words spoken by Christ : “ He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood abides in Me and I in him,” and : “ He that eateth this bread shall live forever.”

Such emotions of love towards Jesus will send forth a fragrance that shall pervade our whole life, and which St. Paul, speaking of the faithful followers of the Saviour, calls the sweet odor of Christ.

“The coming of the Holy Ghost.” Christ, as St. John tells us, sent the Holy Ghost not to remain with His Apostles only, but also with all those who would believe in Him to the end of time. As often as you meditate on this glorious mystery look up to Mary, surrounded by the Apostles and first disciples of Christ. Contemplate her, the Spouse of the Holy Ghost, and consider how abundantly the divine Spirit poured forth His seven gifts into her soul. Ask of our good Mother, that she may obtain for you a great increase of the seven gifts of the Paraclete.

Just as these heavenly gifts render the Christian an active member of the Church militant, and inspire him with fidelity and courage to give testimony to his holy faith in life and death, so do they likewise designate the true child of Mary.

The true child of Mary is filled with the fear of the Lord and the fear of sin; it flees from temptations and conquers them, receives often the Sacrament of Penance, and is not influenced by human respect.

The true child of Mary loves prayer; often fortifies itself with the Most Holy Sacrament of the altar, and celebrates with devotion the feasts of the Church.

The true child of Mary endeavors to grow in the science of the saints, cares for the one thing neces-

sary, the salvation of its soul, and is always ready to assist others with good counsel.

The true child of Mary shows itself, for the love of Jesus and Mary, courageous and submissive in times of adversity, judges the world in the light of faith, and tries to employ every moment in the work of its eternal salvation. The dutiful servant of the blessed Mother of God prays often to the Holy Ghost, that He may fill his heart ever more and more with holy intentions and desires.

Oh, what a fragrance of holy thoughts pervades the souls of the children of Mary!

“The assumption of our Lady into heaven.” Who could meditate upon this mystery without wishing soon to enter heaven, and enjoying forever the presence of the blessed Mother of our Redeemer? But the *question* whether you will go to the abode of the blessed, will be decided by the sanctity of your life, and your *constancy* in the service of God. Now, the surest pledge for such a perseverance is, according to the holy fathers and doctors of the Church, a genuine devotion to the blessed Virgin.

Child of Mary, profess openly your allegiance to her, that at the end of your life she may assist you with a mother's care.

“The coronation of our Lady in heaven.” Contemplate Mary sitting on her throne in heaven. St. John once had a vision, in which he saw Christ in heaven, adorned with precious diadems. Now, every one of these ensignia of royalty is also borne by Mary, the

Queen of heaven. Rejoice, then, O child of Mary! for one day, and perhaps soon, will you not only see her in all her glory, but also participate in her splendor forever.

What a canticle of joy will your soul entone before the throne of Mary, as soon as you will comprehend with what maternal solicitude the Queen of heaven watched over you, lest you might forfeit the heirloom of a blissful eternity, and be separated from her forever.

After these holy considerations renew the resolution of devoting yourself entirely to her honor, love, and imitation upon earth, and of gaining over as many hearts as possible to her honor and veneration.

Such holy emotions and desires, excited in a child of Mary by meditation on the glorious mysteries, will rise towards heaven agreeable as the fragrance of roses, to the greater glory of God, and to the greater honor of Mary, our blessed, glorious Mother. Amen!

FEAST OF THE HOLY ANGELS.

FIRST SERMON.

“Behold, I will send My angel, who shall go before thee ; take notice of him, and hear his voice.”—Ex. xxiii.

TO-DAY we celebrate the Feast of our Guardian Angels—a solemnity which, as your own joyous sentiments testify, is especially dear to the heart of every faithful Christian. And how can it be otherwise, since the occasion reminds us of the great benefits bestowed upon us by the Almighty, in giving to each one a watchful Angel to be the companion of his life, thus exhibiting a providence so loving as to extend at once over our eternal and our temporal well-fare?

The interest of this festival is heightened by the circumstance that our veneration is not offered to beings who, like the Saints, pass their happy existence in far remote regions; but that our homage is tendered to creatures that ever linger near us, accompany us, watch over us, protect us, and conduct us safely by the hand toward our eternal and blissful home.

The heavenly spirit that thus accomplishes God's

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grand design in our regard we call the Guardian Angel; and St. Jerome, at the sight of this wonderful display of God's goodness, cries out: "O what a great dignity it is for a man ever to be protected and guided by an Angel!"

It is, then, the duty of the Guardian Angels to spread their sheltering wings over their charges—a duty which they fulfill with the greatest exactness and fidelity. But what reciprocal service, dear Christians, should we proffer to our Guardian Angels for their solicitous care? Is it not but just that we should, as we are told in the above text, imitate the inestimable qualities that shine forth in the nature of these celestial spirits?

As St. Paul addresses to the children of the Church these words: "Be ye imitators of me, as I am of Jesus Christ," so the Guardian Angels appeal to their trusted friends with the entreaty: "Would ye have life? then be ye imitators of me, as I am a bright copy of St. Michael, the mirror of the Almighty."

Let us, then, dear Christians, contemplate, in to-day's sermon, the heavenly virtues of our Guardian Angels with a view of ingrafting them on our souls.

O Mary, Queen of Angels, be thou our advocate before the throne of God, imploring for us the grace to fulfill His will on earth with the same fidelity as the Angels do in heaven!

I address you in the holy name of Jesus, for the greater glory of God!

If we are desirous to become true followers of our Guardian Angels, we must commence at once to reform our lives; and we must endeavor most strenuously to render our conduct similar to theirs, in accordance with the express command of Jesus Christ: "Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven."

Now, in examining the heavenly properties of the Angels, we are most forcibly struck by one characteristic mark of theirs, which, to imitate, ought to be our first, our special aim. I mean their entire freedom from sin.

It is this spotless *purity* of soul which confers on these blessed spirits their title of good Angels; it is this excellence that confers on them the honor of being our guardians.

Yes, the Angels are without sin; for, hardly had Lucifer and his followers yielded to that first and only thought of pride—a thought not even carried into execution—but they were hurled into the abyss of hell, and at once changed from Angels into demons.

Hence, you can imagine with what horror the Angels look upon sin! They stand constantly before the throne of God, where, gazing upon His holy countenance, they draw from it, in deep draughts, their burning love and profound knowledge; and, since the detestation of sin is proportionate to one's love and knowledge of God, we can form an idea of the intensity with which the Angels must hate every outrage offered to the Almighty.

Hence, too, it is easy to understand why the Angels

make it their first and principal concern to avert every temptation from the souls confided to their charge; or, to enable them to escape unharmed when they see them beset by like dangers. Such is the anxious solicitude of the Guardian Angels in your regard.

But how do you requite this kindness? Do you not still continue to heap sin upon sin? If so, then woe to you, for the abominable sight has filled your good Angel with horror, and driven him far from your side! With horror and loathing he frowns upon you! He sees you transformed, by the defilement of sin, from a child of God into a menial of Satan. He beholds you become like the very demons themselves, by destroying the temple of God within you, and erecting in its stead an abode for the evil spirits.

If, then, we desire to imitate our Guardian Angels, by depicting their virtues on our hearts, let us preserve our consciences pure from all stain of sin. Let us, furthermore, beseech them to warn us of the approach of temptation; and, should God, for our greater purification, permit the tempter to assail us, let us fly at once under their protecting wings, entreating them to aid us in resisting the Evil One with promptness and with that entirely determined will with which they themselves have defeated the devil.

However, should we have the misfortune to be defeated by Satan, O let us implore our good Guardian Angel, in all humility, to obtain for us the grace of eliciting true *contrition*, and of reconciling ourselves to God by a good confession.

Then will that benevolent spirit rejoicingly draw near us again, and stretch out to us his guiding hand.

But the Angels are not only free from all sin, but they are also the external reflex of God's perfections.

According to the degree of divine splendor which beautifies their nature, they are distinguished into various choirs or orders, one ascending above another, until the bright series is crowned with those most perfect of God's creatures—those Angels of Love, the Seraphim, and the seven heavenly Princes, led on by St. Michael the Archangel.

In fact, oh, what a wonderful amount of accidental glory does accrue to God from the innumerable Choirs of Angels! And why do we not also strive, to the best of our power, to glorify God externally, evincing ourselves, as St. Paul says, the followers of God by daily *increase* in the practice of solid virtue.

Now, God is every-where. He is infinite Power, Wisdom, and Goodness. He is replenished with infinite Holiness, Mercy, and Clemency. He is infinite Majesty, Love, and Beatitude.

All these attributes of God demand of us the practice of certain corresponding virtues, by which we are required to make daily progress in the knowledge of God; to place implicit confidence in His decrees, and resign our wills totally into His hands; to glorify His holiness, by exhibiting a holy desire and thirst after *perfection*; to carry our cross with patience and without murmuring, never wavering in our fidelity, nor

wandering about in fear and trembling on account of the frequency of His unexpected chastisements.

But, above all, we must, according to the example of the Angels, make good these sentiments of our hearts by an ardent *zeal* to know and fulfill the most sacred will of God, showing it principally in a faithful fulfillment of the duties of our state.

If our life be such, there is no doubt but we shall approach nearer and nearer to the perfection of the Angels.

Nay, divines affirm that some of God's Saints have equaled, nay, even surpassed the holiness of some of the Angels; so perfectly did they accomplish His adorable will.

This truth will strike you still more forcibly, if you consider the consoling words which our Lord on one occasion addressed to St. Gertrude, who had been thus bewailing her miseries: "Oh, wretched me! how can the earth any longer bear so despicable a creature?" To which our Lord promptly rejoined: "Gertrude, all the Angels yearn for the moment when thou shalt make thy entrance into heaven, to be one of their company, to participate in their love and beatitude. They are astounded at the sight of thy perfection!"

After this there will be no need of dwelling at length on the elevation to which Mary, the Queen of Angels, has been raised, and sits enthroned in glory, far above even the loftiest of the angelic spirits.

Now, the question may be asked: What means and

practices are the most efficacious in enabling us to lead a life conformable to that of the Angels? To answer this question, let us fix our gaze on the bright model we have in our Guardian Angel. This heavenly guide is one of the *good* Angels; and he is such by virtue of that *determination*, that unshaken *firmness*, with which he re-echoes the war-cry uttered by St. Michael the Archangel: "*Who is like unto God?*" This watchword resounded from the lips of the good Angels during their strife against Lucifer, and edged the swords with which they struck down that proud rebel and his retinue and thrust them into hell.

"Peace on earth to men who are of good and determined will," said the Angels at the birth of our Lord. "If thou *wilt*," says our Saviour Himself, "thou canst enter into the kingdom of heaven." But in this sincere, firm, unshaken will men are often deficient; and hence so many, by the abuse of their free will, are doomed to eternal perdition. Wavering between virtue and vice, they will and will not. They say: "I desire to do good;" but they lack the strength to declare: "Yes, certainly, I will; I am determined."

If this resolute determination had struck deep roots in our soul, how many occasions of sin would not be avoided! If we were to meet every temptation with a firm, No, no! how powerless, how despicable would it not become!

But, alas! men only too often resemble our Lord's executioners, who, on Palm Sunday, hailed Him in the streets of Jerusalem, singing: "Hosannah to the

son of David ;” and, on the Friday following, pronounced sentence of death, crying out : “ Crucify Him ! away with Him ! ”

Do you, however, dear Christians, take a firm resolution to deliver yourselves up wholly and entirely to His adorable will !

Let us observe, further, that the Angels look constantly upon the face of the Most High. Why, I ask you, is it that we often grow remiss in our attachment to God ? It is because the remembrance of God becomes effaced ; it is because we no longer walk in His *presence* ; it is because we view our present condition, not from a heavenly, but from a worldly standpoint. Were we but to abandon this perverse manner of passing judgment on things, how steadfastly we should pursue the path to salvation !

Another quality of the Angels is the ardor with which they worship the Deity. Their “ holy, holy, holy,” resounds constantly through the heavenly Jerusalem before the throne of God.

If we desire to resemble the Angels also in this respect, we must, as our Lord demands, acquire the habit of constant *prayer*, *i. e.*, we must persevere in the holy practice until it appears to us no longer a burdensome duty, but a sweet necessity of our heart. When we have reached that point, we need no longer be in dread as to the good state of our soul ; for then the promise of Christ will be fulfilled in us : “ Where two or three are together in My Name, I am in the midst of them.”

These, beloved Christians, are some of the characteristic marks which signalize our Angel Guardians. Let us, then, endeavor to imitate these bright models. If we do so, we may rest assured that the same Angel who extended his protection over us during life, and whose heavenly qualities we strove to engrave on our souls, will, at our death, conduct us before the judgment-seat, and bid us enter into the joys of the Lord, to partake, in His society, of the glory and bliss of eternal life.—Amen!

SECOND SERMON.

“For He hath given His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. In their hands they shall bear thee up; lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.”—Ps. xc.

ON the feast of the Archangel Raphael, the Church prays: “O God, Who hast given the Archangel Raphael as a companion to Tobias, grant that we, Thy servants, may be strengthened by his assistance and helped by his protection.”

The desire to which the Church gives expression in these words, finds its fulfillment in the angel, whom God has given to every man, to accompany him during life and conduct him securely to his eternal home.

What weighty reasons have we not, then, to offer thanks to the Lord for choosing such a companion and guide for us!

The road that leads to eternal salvation is shrouded in darkness, and hence we may easily be led astray if we rely on our own selves. It is a road along which the enemies of our salvation lie in ambush, to surprise us, wound us, and, if possible, to bring about our utter ruin.

Yet, if we be but of good will, we need not fear, for by our side walks an angel, endowed with all the qualities of a good guide, in whom we may put entire trust, following him, without anxiety, on our hazardous journey through life.

Let us, then, consider what those traits are in our Guardian Angel which render him a good guide.

O Mary, Queen of Angels, recommend us to our Guardian Angels, that at thy bidding they may assist us to walk on the right path—that path which will lead us to God and to thee, O Queen of Angels!

I address you in the holy name of Jesus, for the greater glory of God!

The qualities for which we look, in a reliable guide, are, besides a thorough *knowledge* of the road, are upright *character*, obliging *behavior*, and amiable *manners*. To a guide possessing these qualities the preference will always be given over others not similarly gifted.

We shall now see in how remarkable a degree our Guardian Angel has all these requisites of a good guide, and is thus rendered thoroughly fit to discharge his duty.

Only think of it; that companion of yours is an *Angel!* What a virtuous, amiable, excellent being must he not then be! As an angel he is *raised far above the level of men*. In comparison with his tremendous power of mind, the mental strength of the greatest genius dwindles to nothing.

An Angel is a being that, arrayed in the glory of heaven, arrests the delighted gaze of the Almighty! On one occasion, St. John, in an ecstasy, saw an Angel clothed in such wonderful beauty that he mis-

took him, at first, for our Lord Himself, and was about to fall down and adore him. And yet the vision was but an angel. Hence, you can form some idea of the ravishing beauty of an angel.

Such a being, then, is that heavenly protector of yours. Hence, Holy Writ justly makes us this exhortation: "Honor him; he is deserving of it."

Oh, would that you could share the happiness of St. Frances of Rome, who always beheld her Angel Guardian by her side! How devout and modest would you then not be, at all times and in all places, on account of his visible presence. St. Bernardin of Sienna, makes the very just remark that, should your Angel Guardian display, before your eyes, all the glory with which he is surrounded near the throne of God, the entire world, not even excepting the sun, would fade from your sight, and nothing would be seen but that one Angel, so dazzling would his brightness be. But here you may apply that promise of Jesus Christ: "Blessed are those that have not seen and have believed." Think of your Guardian Angel often during the day, and frequently call to mind his actual presence at your side. The remembrance of him, whether you be working, taking your meals, resting, or in suffering, will console and render you more devout.

We are better pleased with a guide if he is well *affected* toward us, and if he offers his services with a good *grace*. Should he lack these qualities, we would prefer to travel alone, even through dangerous places.

Now, as to our Guardian Angel, he delights in our company; he loves us as chosen citizens of heaven; as children of Jesus Christ, that, redeemed in the blood of the Lamb, are destined to be united with him in heaven.

Then he takes upon himself the duty of a guide with so much the more readiness, as he knows that if the one intrusted to his charge be saved, he himself shall one day have a special interest in his bliss.

He is, moreover, encouraged in the discharge of his office by the thought that he unites to himself, by the bonds of gratitude, the hearts of all those who are in any way related to his charge by the ties of blood, or love, or friendship, such as father, mother, husband, and wife. All these will one day pay him special homage in the realm of the Blessed.

But what most sweetens the labor of the Guardian Angel, in performing his task, is the love of *Jesus* and *Mary*. He is well aware how our dear Mother yearns to clasp to her loving embrace the children whom Jesus confided to her at the foot of the cross; he fully appreciates the longing desire of our Saviour to press to His bosom the brothers for whom He shed the last drop of His blood; and he is assured that Jesus, the King of heaven and earth, will reward him richly for his services.

Finally, is he not sent by the most Holy Trinity, whose greatest desire it is to see all men saved and sanctified?

A guide will be the more welcome if the road to be traveled over is *unknown*, and, above all, if it leads through an *unsafe* and dangerous country; such is the road to heaven.

Hence, ought we not to rejoice at having so experienced, prudent, and faithful a companion, on our journey through life, as our Angel Guardian is? He has already fought the good fight, on which depended his eternal salvation. He has also come from heaven, and hence he knows the road thither. Therefore let us follow him with blind confidence.

He is, moreover, a prudent guide. The wiles of Lucifer could not deceive him, whilst they deceived so many others. Besides, he has become wiser by the additional experience of over five thousand years.

He has seen and known innumerable pilgrims in this world, who, by diligently following the advice of their Guardian Angels, have safely reached their eternal home.

Our Guardian Angel is also a *prayerful* spirit, who, standing before the throne of God, asks graces for his charge—graces which are readily granted to so great a friend of the Almighty!

Moreover, he is aided in his petition by numerous other Angels, in whose company he lives, and who are united to him by the bonds of the tenderest love; together with them he besieges the throne of mercy; and along with them he offers up his prayers before the divine Majesty.

Priests have become aware, in times of Jubilees

and Missions, of the mutual services which the angels render each other in order to obtain more plentiful graces for the souls intrusted to their care.

This powerful protection of our Guardian Angel extends to our body as well as to our soul.

In tending to the needs of our *body*, the angels are helped by their thorough knowledge of the powers of nature, as we can see in the instance of the Archangel Raphael, the guide of young Tobias.

As regards the wants of our *soul*, our Guardian Angel knows all the wiles and crafts of Satan; and when the Evil One tempts us, he inspires us with encouraging thoughts, thwarts his plans, and secures our eternal salvation.

He is, moreover, a *conquering* angel, dreaded by the devils, since they already experienced his power when they first rose in revolt against God. Let us, therefore, put all our confidence in him.

He is, finally, a *faithful* guide, who will never abandon us in life; who will protect us at the hour of death, and still help us in the pains of purgatory.

Yes, our Guardian Angel will assist us during life. No matter how long it may be, he will fulfill his duty of praying for us and protecting us at all times and in all places—in Europe as well as in Asia, in Africa no less than in America.

He watches over us during our hours of work and leisure, and is near us in our joys and sufferings, in our consolations and temptations.

But, above all, our Guardian Angel will assist us at the awful hour of *death*, on which our whole eternity depends. At that moment, certainly, we may be sure of his help and protection.

For, it is especially in our agony that Satan strains every nerve in order to secure our soul and thrust it into hell. He knows but too well that if he is able to seize on her then, he holds her forever; for where the tree falleth, there it remaineth.

Therefore it is that he has often appeared visibly to the dying, and has even dared to frighten and assail the Saints. But the Guardian Angel, too, is on the alert. He is aware of the fact that if he rescues a soul at the hour of death, it can never again be torn from him, and that then he has fulfilled his mission in its regard. On this account he endeavors, to the best of his power, to assist the departing soul, and is ready, if need be, to call other angels to his aid in driving away the evil spirits, and in obtaining, by his prayers, for the dying person, the grace of a happy death.

But, even after a soul has departed this life, he ceases not to assist her; for, if she be still detained in the flames of *Purgatory*, he offers up prayers for her before the throne of God, thus to lessen and shorten her pains. He also incites the friends of the deceased to aid him, by prayer, and by offering up the holy sacrifice of the Mass.

Finally, the Guardian Angel leads the soul intrusted to his care into eternal bliss; and who can

describe his joy on seeing at last all his efforts crowned?

And the soul that is saved, what will she do?

With what feelings of gratitude will she not hail her adviser and guardian, especially when she sees clearly to what a degree she is indebted to his care for her eternal salvation.

I desire, for all of you here present, to follow in this way your heavenly guide, so that, at the end of your journey through life, you may be led triumphantly into heaven by your Guardian Angels.—Amen.

THIRD SERMON.

“I became all things to all men that I might save all.”—1 Cor. ix, 22.

THE holy Angels whom God has sent to wait upon mankind fulfill their duty with the greatest readiness, in obedience to the Almighty and out of love to Him; for, as the Psalmist sings, they are ordered by the Lord to take care of the welfare of souls.

Yet we are greatly mistaken if we imagine that this command regards only the Angels. Not at all! It is also addressed to each and every one of us.

We may gather this first from the precept of Jesus Christ: “Love thy neighbor as thyself.” Hence it follows that every man must apply himself to the well-being of his brethren with the same earnestness as he does to his own.

In another passage of Holy Writ God addresses these express words to each soul: “He hath confided unto thee the welfare of thy brother.” That is, the Lord desires that you should love all men as brethren; that you should attend to the spiritual as well as the corporal needs of each other.

Therefore, dear Christian, honor your own Guardian Angel and imitate him, but at the same time—

Honor also the Guardian Angel of your neighbor, and endeavor to be yourself a Guardian Angel to him.

O Mary, Queen of the children of God, Protectress of the Church, and Refuge of Christians, pour out into

the souls of thy children the spirit of mutual love for their mutual sanctification!

I speak to you in the holy name of Jesus, for the greater glory of God!

We read of Blessed Peter Faber, the first disciple of St. Ignatius, that whenever he drew near a village or town in which he desired to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ, he would, even before arriving, invoke the Guardian Angels of all living there, that they might obtain for him the grace of laboring fruitfully for its inhabitants.

It is really astonishing to see that a devotion is so neglected which promises such fruits, and which holds out motives for its practice that are at once so numerous and striking.

It is indeed a sad thing to observe that even the devotion to our own Guardian Angel is not sufficiently esteemed. How few grown persons there are that apply to it with fervor!

It is true that as long as we are children our parents accustom us to offer some short prayers in honor of the Guardian Angel. But, as regards the parents themselves and adults in general, they have long neglected to honor their Guardian Angel; nay, they often do not even think of him for years, much less do they remember his presence daily and hourly, as they ought.

Am I not in the right? Ask yourselves whether you pray every day to your Angel Guardian, whether

you often call to mind the assistance he offers you, especially during temptations, and whether you unite your prayers to his, thus to render them more fruitful.

Is it then, a wonder, that if we neglect our own Guardian Angel, we pay no regard whatsoever to the Guardian Angels of others?

How many are there not that, during their whole life, have given not even one thought to these benevolent spirits! But, as for you, resolve to act differently for the future, and be assured that the Angels will assist you and obtain for you the grace to become a Guardian Angel to those with whom you deal, according to the words of St. Paul: "Be ye the sweet odor of Jesus Christ." Then you may apply to your own persons what St. Paul says of himself: "I became all things to all men that I might save all."

And fear not that there will be wanting occasions to show yourselves Guardian Angels towards your neighbor. Have but a good will, and then look about you. You have opportunities at home.

If you are a married person St. Paul tells you what you ought to do. He says: "Husbands, love your wives as Christ also loved the Church; as the Church is subject to Christ, so also let wives be subject to their husbands in all things;" *i. e.*, you must love each other not merely from worldly motives, but from such motives as faith inspires.

Remember that matrimony is a holy state; that God has united husband and wife not indeed to live a life of pleasure and ease on earth, but to give testi-

mony to the Church of Christ before all men by their holiness of life.

Oh, how I could wish to see you lead such a life—to see the *husband* become a *Guardian Angel* to the *wife*, and the *wife* to the *husband*! How much assistance could you not then afford one another for your eternal salvation!

Let us now examine in how many different manners the wife can exercise an influence over her spouse's religious conduct.

The first and most effectual way of advancing his spiritual welfare is to set him a *good example*. If the wife attends to her daily prayers; if she goes to hear Mass whenever it is possible; if she receives the Sacraments with due frequency, she may effect a surprising change in her husband's conduct, and force from him the acknowledgment: "It is true that before marriage I was a lukewarm and indifferent Catholic. I neglected my duties as a Christian entirely, never praying or assisting at Mass, not even on Sundays, much less receiving the Sacraments. I lived in the habit of sin, and, what is worse, in the habit of mortal sin. But, thanks be to God, since I have your example before my eyes, I am wholly changed. I have become a true Christian. Your pious conduct has effected all this in me."

Besides setting her husband a good example, she ought also closely to watch over his conduct. She ought to observe whether he associates with bad companions. Should this be the case, she should seize the

most convenient opportunity of reminding him of the danger, and of warning him of the bad consequences which will follow so unchristian a way of acting. She ought, further, to urge him to cleanse himself from guilt by a good confession, and to commence a new life in the service of God.

But especially should the wife evince her pure and tender love to her husband when he is stricken down with a severe illness that is likely to prove fatal. Let it then be her principal care to afford him an occasion of confessing his sins and receiving the viaticum, that, strengthened with the Sacraments, he may be taken up into the joy of his Lord, there to pray for his wife, and one day to thank her for having been his deliverer from eternal damnation.

If *wives* attend in this manner to the spiritual wants of their husbands, they will in truth prove Guardian Angels to them; and I may have the consolation of hearing again what a married man, who had neglected his spiritual duties, once told me: "Father," he said, "who do you think has changed me from a lukewarm man into a fervent Christian? It is she who stands here at my side. It is my wife. She has pressed and entreated me to amend my life, until at last I have yielded. Indeed, I do not deserve to be the husband of such a wife." Yes, she was indeed a treasure to her husband.

But no less praise is to be lavished on that husband to whose exertion is due the conversion and salvation of his wife.

Many a married woman has, with tears, made me an avowal like the following: "As, my father and mother died early, I was confided to the care of strangers. There my education was neglected, and I became very indifferent in religious matters. But ever since I was married to so good, so religious a husband, I have become quite another person. I have been led back to the right road."

A special blessing has sometimes descended on either of the spouses in mixed marriages when one was the cause of the other's embracing the true faith—that greatest of gifts which any man can bestow on his neighbor. Happy indeed are those married people who are thus Guardian Angels one to the other!

If husband and wife are bound to advance each other in holiness, this obligation is still greater on parents in relation to their children.

Parents who wish to exhibit themselves true Guardian Angels to their children, should remember that there is one thing which it behooves them to do above all, viz., to lead a truly Christian life themselves. An exact fulfillment of the commandments of God and of the Church on the part of parents will advance their children wonderfully in piety and in the practice of all virtues. Even after death the holiness of father and mother will uphold and strengthen their offspring in all the temptations and trials of life.

However, besides good example, parents, in conducting the education of their children, have a thousand other means of making of their children true

servants of God. Such a result they ever obtain by accustoming their children from childhood to pray devoutly, by instructing them in the first principles of religion, by obliging them to read in some pious book every evening, and by preparing them thoroughly for their first Holy Communion.

Parents should, further, be exceedingly careful in directing their children in the choice of a state of life. They should, moreover, punish them if they be given to some vice, remove from them all occasions of sin, and especially keep them from all intercourse with wicked companions.

I can assure you, parents here present, that if you adopt such a course of action towards your children, you will become their true visible Guardian Angels; and that when the burden of education weighs heavily upon you, you may justly console yourselves with the thought that their invisible Guardian Angels will thank and reward you for your services.

In a similar manner *sisters* and *brothers* should prove Guardian Angels to each other, and to all those with whom they come in contact in the same family or house.

But your obligation does not stop here. No; it is your bounden duty to fulfill the office of Guardian Angel towards all with whom you may have any intercourse, Catholics as well as non-Catholics, according to the express command of our Lord: "So let your light shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father Who is in heaven."

What beautiful instances of this disinterested charity do we not find recorded in the "Lives of the Saints;" but especially in the lives of founders of Religious Orders and of great missionaries, those vessels that are especially set apart for the *Sanctuary!*

Missionaries are those who have spread, and are still spreading, the seed of the Gospel all over the world, preaching to all nations the word of truth, and giving evidence of the divine origin of our religion by the holiness of their lives. They have become Guardian Angels to the present generation of men, and, through them, will be such to their posterity.

Only think of St. Francis Xavier! May we not truly call him the Guardian Angel of those innumerable pagans of Japan to whom he brought the glad tidings of the Gospel, and whom he regenerated with his own hand in the waters of Baptism?

The same may be said of the many founders of Religious Orders—of St. Benedict, of St. Dominic, of St. Francis, and of St. Ignatius.

Oh, would that we could behold them now in heaven, surrounded by numerous Saints that press round them to express their gratitude for the generosity of heart they showed in caring for the salvation of their neighbor while they procured their own; to thank them for opening the portals of heaven to them and so many others, by the establishment of Religious Orders and Congregations.

But woe to him who follows an opposite course; who, instead of proving a Guardian Angel to his neighbor,

becomes, by his example, conversation, and advice, the murderer of his brother's soul.

Such a man fastens to his own neck the millstone of which our Lord speaks when He says: "Woe to him through whom scandals come; it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck and he were cast into the sea, than that he should scandalize one of these little ones." Yes, after death that millstone will draw him down into hell, there to be handed over to cruel executioners—those demons whom he aided during life in their fiendish design of seducing and ruining souls.

My brethren, make your choice, for choose you must! There is no middle course; you will either be a Guardian Angel to your neighbor or a destroying devil; you will either lead your neighbor to the path of salvation or guide him to the broad road which leads to perdition. What a terrible alternative! Make your choice while it is yet time.—Amen!

FEAST OF THE CONSECRATION OF A CHURCH.

FIRST SERMON.

“Christ loved the Church, and delivered Himself up for it, that He might sanctify it.”—Ephes. v, 25.

TO-DAY we commemorate that solemn festival on which, amid universal rejoicings, this Temple of God was consecrated to the honor and service of the Most High.

The very sight of a Catholic Church reminds us of the only true, the only divine Church which Christ has established here upon earth, constituting it, if I may so call it, a channel that conveys to the children of men the bountiful gifts of Redemption. And most conveniently does our Mother, the Church, pour forth all the treasures of her blessings and imposing ceremonial rites when she blesses and consecrates her temples of worship.

Therefore, I wish to call your attention to the character attached to the consecration.

The words of St. Paul, which I made use of at the outset of my discourse, evidently point to the character of the consecration imparted by Christ Himself to His Church, when He made her the common Mother, unto the end of time, of all the children of God scat-

tered over the earth. The words: "Christ loved His Church, that He might sanctify it," imply that the Church is to represent the visible kingdom of God upon earth—the kingdom of grace, of light, of truth, of consolation—and the only haven of salvation.

This Church of God is to raise her lofty head above the sky, and entone an eternal canticle of triumph and praise before the throne of the Most High.

From these considerations I infer, that the consecration which Christ gave to His Church, proceeded from a movement of His love, and that the consecration of the temples raised by our Mother, the Church, partecipate of the riches of this divine love by which Christ loves His Church.

O most holy Mary, thou who art the most worthy Temple of the Godhead, Mother of our Lord Jesus Christ, obtain for us the grace that our hearts, purified by the fire of divine love, may be true temples of God!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, to the greater glory of God!

I have just said that the consecration with which Christ sanctified His Church, proceeded from a pure love of His adorable Heart, that knows no bounds to its feelings of *compassion*, of *communication*, and of *sanctification*, and which will prove *consoling* and *faithful* to the end. Now to get a clear idea of such a wonderful love, we must bear in mind the doctrine laid

down by the holy fathers, chiefly by St. Augustine and St. Chrysostom, about the manner in which the Church took her rise.

These great doctors unanimously declare that, just as from the side of Adam came forth our first mother Eve, so from the side of Christ issued the Sacraments; that, as while Adam slept in Paradise, the Lord opened his side, and out of one of his ribs formed Eve: so while Christ slept in death on the wood of the cross, the lance opening His loving Heart, caused blood and water (typifying the Church) to gush forth. The water of the wound of Christ symbolized the Sacrament of Baptism, and the blood the Sacrament of the Altar; and these two Sacraments being the principal ones, are well chosen to represent the whole Church.

This circumstance sufficiently proves the eminent qualities of the wonderful consecration by which the Church sprung into existence; for it was effected purely by the Heart of Jesus, and the heart, as is commonly believed, is the seat of love, or that organ which allows man to experience the sweet impulses of love.

And furthermore, the very thought which entered into the impenetrable mind of the Most High,—that of saving the fallen human race,—bears the stamp of that infinite love which characterizes the Redemption in its fulfillment. There was certainly no need of so much labor and suffering to save us. Yet so God willed it, or, as St. John justly expresses it: “God so loved the world as to give His only-begotten Son.” So great a condescension was not shown to the fallen

Angels, though their nature is far above that of men. I admire here, my dear brethren, and profoundly adore the unsearchable designs of divine love. Here, indeed, we find the first feature which signalizes the love of our Redeemer; His love is a love full of *compassion*: "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore have I drawn thee, taking pity on thee." Such are the words of the Holy Ghost himself.

We shall understand better this infinite mercy of God, if we examine the manner in which Christ has completed the work of our Redemption. There we see Him, on Mount Calvary, nailed to a cross, raised between heaven and earth, with His arms stretched out towards us; and with a sorrowful and blood-stained countenance, inviting all men to come and to suffer, in their turn, so as to share abundantly in the infinite merits of their Lord and Redeemer. Yes, dear brethren, His very looks speak words of love to our hardened souls: "Oh, all ye that pass by the way, attend, and see if there be any sorrow like to my sorrow." You see, then, that it was an impulse of His infinite mercy for us that caused Him so to complete the work of our salvation, as to remove from us the least thought of despair and despondency, and to induce us all to throw ourselves with child-like confidence into the arms of our merciful Father.

You are all bound to admire this miracle of generous and unreserved charity by which our blessed Redeemer embraced and sanctified the Church.

The love by which Christ loved His Church was

most generous and communicative. To her He gave His word and His doctrine ; to her He left the keys of heaven, all His merits, and an inexhaustible source of graces, open to those who pray in His name and have recourse to the Sacraments. Nay, He gave us His very Person in the Most Blessed Sacrament, and He remains with us to the end of time. So, then, the love which Christ showed us when He consecrated His Church, sprung from a generous and unreserved sentiment of His divine Heart, and it will be crowned in heaven, when, in that eternal kingdom of love, the whole Church, in company with her spouse Jesus Christ, will reign and flourish, and share with Him an endless glory and eternal blessedness.

But, my dear friends, until the glorious day of our triumph dawns, it is our lot to wander in this valley of tears, and to live as if our life were spent among the blessed spirits, as our Lord recommends in His admirable prayer : “ Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” Yes, such should the Church appear even here below,—a body with which Christ has left every means of sanctification, and of compliance with the earnest recommendation : “ Be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.” The love of Jesus for His Church was a sanctifying one. And, in fact, the Church of Christ alone can bring forth new elect to swell the bands of the blessed, in whose communion we live, and whom we are happy and honored to call by the sweet names of brothers and sisters. But as so holy

a life necessarily implies struggles and sacrifices, the Christian needs consolation and encouragement. And here we have another of the characteristics of the love which Christ bears to His Church. It is a most consoling love for all her true children. For has not Christ promised a hundred-fold, even in this world to His true followers? Yes, dear brethren, all those who with an eager spirit and with perseverance follow Christ our Lord, can not but experience the fulfillment of such a promise, and may well, as loving children of the Church, cry out with the Apostle: "I exceedingly abound with joy in all our tribulation."

Finally, the love which Christ manifested for His spouse, the Church, at the time of her foundation, bore the character of a *faithful* love. In spite of all the storms and persecutions raised against the rock on which the Church is built for about nineteen centuries, Christ stands ever at her side, guides her, and shields her from all dangers. To her we may well apply the words of Gamaliel: "Because if this is the work of God, you will never destroy it." This character of faithfulness, as well as all the other loving qualities, is necessarily connected with the solemn consecration given by our Mother, the Church, to temples raised to God's service and glory.

Now to make the truth of what I have advanced more tangible, I will set it forth in a concise way.

The Consecration of a Church, intended for the service of the Most High, is the effect of the love of God, full of compassion for us. For the Church is the

place of which it is spoken: "I have chosen this spot that I be merciful unto all that hasten hither, and pour out before Me their hearts in prayer."

Again, the Consecration of a Church is an effect of the communicative and sanctifying love of Christ. Because the Church, by its consecrations, is dedicated for the purpose of prayer, and especially of common prayer; for the dispensation of the Sacrament of Penance; for the offering of the Holy Sacrifice, that oblation of the Lamb, for the benefit of the living and the dead.

Who can tell the numbers that have entered into this sacred place, and, lifting up their supplicating hands towards heaven, have been succored in their necessities? and who can say, how many from the present hour to the end of time will hence send their supplications heavenwards, and here find mercy and relief?

But, above all, it is here that we see the fulfillment of the promise which Christ has made to those who are united in prayer: "Where there are two or three gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them." And again: "When two are united and pray in common in My Father's name, they will be heard."

Here resounds the Word of God; here flows an abundant stream of graces through the two great channels of Baptism and Confirmation. And after the lapse of a few years you may ask how many Masses have already been said in this place, and

how many more will be said hereafter? how many Communion have here been received, and how many more will yet be received? How many sinners have in these confessionals obtained the grace of reconciliation with God? how many others have received the Sacramental blessing of matrimony within these holy precincts? and, finally, how many departed souls have found comfort and relief in the scorching flames of purgatory from the prayers offered up for them in this holy place? And, over and above all, Christ Himself is here present, as He is in heaven, and makes of this spot, by His adorable presence, a paradise upon earth. Every thing we see in a Church, their very construction, the ringing of the bells, the pulpit, the confessional, says in a mysterious and salutary language to the soul of a candid child of the Church: "Be therefore holy, as your God is holy."

Lastly, I said that the consecration implies that Christ loves us with a heart full of mercy and sweet consolation, which is precisely the character of the consecration of our Churches.

Does not the very sight of a Church, be it in the center of a large city, or on the top of a hill somewhere out in the country, or the mere aspect of a lonely chapel, fill the heart with consoling thoughts? And pray tell me, dear brethren, whither do you, in your sorrow and distress, wend your steps more eagerly in quest of consolation than to the Church of God? "Come to me all ye that are sad and weary, and I will refresh you." Such are the words which

issue from every Tabernacle, sent by Jesus as so many darts of loving invitation to the children of His dear spouse, the Church. Blessed are all that give ear to the invitation ; for with Jesus Christ they will find consolation.

Then, too, the consecration of the Church of Christ is the master-piece of His faithful Heart. This feature of Christ's *faithful* love for His Church is brought out and made clear to us in the consecration of our Churches. As long as the House of God stands erect, and is made use of as a holy place of worship, Christ will be found there, no less than in St. Peter's at Rome ; and He has so ordained it, that all, without exception, may come hither and draw life and comfort at the inexhaustible fountain of grace.

Lastly, my dear brethren, to understand with what fidelity Jesus Christ loved us, we have but to interrogate our lives, and consider the infidelities we have offered to Him in return. Yet He is ever ready to pardon us again and again, and impart to us unceasing favors to further your salvation and sanctification.

May the consideration of these few thoughts I have suggested be present to your minds as often as you enter the house of God and fill your hearts with devotion, in order that, sanctified by the hidden workings of His divine love, you become living temples of the Holy Ghost.—Amen!

SECOND SERMON.

“With Him there is plentiful redemption.”—Psalm cxxix.

THE Psalmist, and the whole human race with him, openly acknowledge their gratitude for the great benefit of Redemption in these words: “Thou hast redeemed us, God of might.” Yes, my dear brethren, we have been redeemed; and who is there that could be unmindful of such a grace? We will more readily appreciate this great benefit, if we reflect that were this the only fruit to be derived from Redemption; viz., the blessing of not being lost forever, but of being saved, through Christ, from the eternal pains of hell, and then placed in the condition in which we suppose unbaptized children to be after their death, we would still be the recipients of an infinite favor.

But, my dear brethren, this was not enough for our merciful Lord. “It is His mercy which has provided that we be not lost,” as the Psalmist expresses it. Still more, however, has it done; for our Redemption has been effected in a plentiful and *superabounding* manner. By dying for mankind upon the cross, Jesus Christ—the heavenly Adam—gave us more, both for time and eternity, than we ever lost by the fall of the first Adam.

This reflection will be clearer, if we run over together the means given us in the Church to work out our salvation; and thus we shall understand, I hope, that all we possess in the eyes of God, as

heirs to His kingdom, comes from a merciful and superabundant Redemption.

But the temples of God, consecrated by an especial solemn dedication, are precisely those places where we are in the most effective way, reminded of the overflowing channels of grace, opened to the children of God through Christ.

Let us, then, to-day enter into the hidden meaning of the words of the Psalmist: "With Thee there is plentiful Redemption." Of this oracle of the Holy Ghost the sight of the Church, whose dedication we celebrate, reminds and assures us.

O Mary, dispenser of Christ's merits, obtain for us the grace thoroughly to appreciate the truth, that by our Redemption we are children of the Church!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, to the greater glory of God!

The Church dedicates her temples principally for this end, that in them she may present to the Triune God her united prayers, offer the sacrifice of the New Testament, and administer to the faithful the holy sacraments, which are the channels established by God to convey sanctifying grace to the faithful, and increase in them the supply of actual grace.

"My house shall be called the house of prayer" (Matt. xxi, 13). These are the words of Christ even in regard to the temple of the Old Law; and, from the very time of the Apostles, places were set apart

in which the Christians might assemble for the purpose of prayer.

Adam prayed, and the patriarchs and the people under the Old Law prayed, though revelation is silent about the promises made in behalf of their prayers. But, as regards the prayers of the children of God under the New Law, we all know the promises of Christ: "Amen, amen, I say to you: if you ask the Father any thing in My Name, He will give it to you" (John xvi, 23). This is Christ's own solemn declaration.

It is, however, principally to prayer in the house of God that the assurance of Christ is to be referred: "Where there are two or three gathered together in My Name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matt. xviii, 20). When we assemble in any place for the purpose of prayer, Christ, according to this assurance, is spiritually amongst us. In the Church, however, behind the door of the tabernacle, Christ is really present in *Person*. How must not this increase our confidence, especially when, with a lively faith, we say to ourselves that a God so near must assuredly hear our prayers!

In the old dispensation, it was rather the merit of him who prayed that made the prayer efficacious; but, in the new, it is especially the merit of Christ that procures to our prayer the power of being heard; for St. John calls out to us: "Let us have confidence, for we have an Advocate with the Father, Who prays for us and with us,"—that is, Christ in heaven, and the

same Jesus upon earth, present in the Most Holy Sacrament. Oh, what a superabundant source of Redemption!

Yes, prayer is the key that unlocks all the treasures of the merits of Christ, drawing thence help from God for the sanctification of our lives, and even relief for all the temporal necessities and misfortunes, so far as this conduces to our eternal salvation. Yea, the Church does not hesitate to acknowledge before God in one of her prayers: That God in His mercy grants more than we dare to ask for.

Therefore, if we lack the graces which the Saints obtained, it is solely because we do not, with the necessary confidence, call on the Name of Jesus; and especially because we do not unite our prayers with the prayers and merits of Christ present in the Most Holy Sacrament, and with that of the whole Church, as we are reminded and invited to do whenever we assemble with the faithful for the purpose of prayer in the temple dedicated to God.

The second end of the Church in assembling her children within the walls of the temples which she has dedicated to the service of God, is to offer there the sacrifice of the New Covenant. Oh, what a source of grace! The sacrifice of the Mass is the same sacrifice which Christ offered on the cross to His heavenly Father—a sacrifice which reconciled mankind with Him, and thus consummated the work of Redemption.

The first prayer of Christ, in the womb of His

blessed Mother, was in itself more than sufficient for the salvation of the human race, as St. Paul assures us in his letter to the Hebrews. But this did not satisfy His liberality. He wished to redeem us with a superabundant Redemption. On the eve of His death, He instituted, in an unbloody manner, that sacrifice which He offered, in a bloody manner, on the cross. It was to be offered in every place on earth from the very foundation of His Church, and in an uninterrupted succession until the consummation of the world, as the prophet Malachias had already foretold.

Certainly Adam, also, had he remained in the state of his original justice, would have offered sacrifice to God, as an expression of the highest worship due to God. Still, whatever sacrifice this might have been, it would have given to God but an imperfect and finite worship and glory, just as all the sacrifices of the Old Law were of a finite worth. They were only types of that sacrifice which was to give to God an infinite glory, because it is Christ, the Incarnate Son of God Himself, Who in it offers His sacred Person to His heavenly Father.

Therefore, if only the Vicar of Christ, who is the Pope, the Head of the Church, had been authorized to offer it daily, this alone would have been a source of plentiful Redemption. But more copiously still was this channel of grace to flow. Countless priests now stand at the altars of the Church all the world over, and raise the Sacred Host and chalice, without intermission, toward heaven, in union with the prayer

of David before the throne of God: "Behold, O Lord, our Protector, and look on the face of Thy Christ" (Psalm lxxxiii, 10).

Again, the Church administers, within the walls of her temples dedicated to the service of God, the Sacraments which, instituted by God, are the visible signs of invisible graces.

We need but examine them one by one, and reflect on their efficacy, to perceive how plentiful are the graces that they impart. They supply superabundantly what we lost in Adam; and they impart to us such an increase of grace as original justice could never have given us.

The first sacrament is "Baptism," by which is remitted the fault of Adam, the effects of which are transmitted to us by the fallen condition of the human race.

But, more than this, by Baptism we are made children of God, heirs of heaven, and obtain the right, through the Incarnation of the Son of God, to call God Himself our Brother. Our human nature is raised, through the glorified Humanity of Christ, above that of the Angels; and heaven becomes an eternal reign of triumphant joy,—it becomes a heaven far more glorious than that which would have received us had Adam never fallen.

The second sacrament is "Confirmation." No doubt man, with the ordinary assistance of grace, is enabled to keep his baptismal vows, and live according to the dictates of faith; but this does not satisfy the goodness of the Redeemer. He gives man a peculiar

sacrament of Confirmation, which is not only to enrich his heart with grace; but also to cause the Holy Ghost Himself, Whose living temples we are made by the superabundance of grace, to enter into his soul.

Christ, indeed, once risen from the dead, entered into His kingdom; and it should have satisfied man that He, to Whom all power is given in heaven and on earth, protects and governs, from His heavenly throne, the Church and every one of her members. But this did not satisfy the generosity of his Saviour's diffusive love. He wished to remain, at the same time, amongst us upon earth; to be approached by *every one*; to offer Himself daily for us on thousands of altars; and even, as far as His own Person is concerned, to enter into the heart of *each one*, there to unite Himself, by His Flesh and Blood, Divinity and Humanity, with each one, and to sow in it the seed of a Resurrection made still more glorious by the superabundance of His Redemption.

But man thus redeemed was to have his liberty subjected to a trial, and so each of us was to remain liable to fall, even after Baptism. But what a difference between our case and that of Adam and Eve! Their single sin deprived them and their posterity of heaven, and opened before them the gates of hell! Whereas, the guilt of the sins that we commit since the Redemption, were it as weighty as the guilt of the rest of the human race, can be removed by a valid and efficacious reception of the sacrament of Penance. Moreover, by going to confession repeatedly, man can obtain, not

only the forgiveness of sins, but also an increase of sanctifying grace. "God," as St. Augustine remarks, "knew how to draw good even out of the evil of sin for the salvation and sanctification of our souls."

Truly, we are redeemed with a superabundant Redemption! Even for the close of our life, the mercy of Christ has prepared for us a sacrament, the sacrament of Extreme Unction. By it man recovers even the health of his body, and obtains a prolongation of his life; or certainly gets the grace, in his agony, to overcome the tempter, secure to himself the remission of the sins that may still cling to his soul, and a more speedy entrance into heaven.

Man, by his fall, was obliged to bear the yoke of sin, and the slavery of the devil; but by redemption he was not only to re-enter the state of sanctifying grace, in which the good Angels persevered, but even to be elevated, by a special sacrament, above the dignity of the Angels. This, as the holy Fathers rightly affirm, is the privilege of the *Priest*, who, by his office, affords more protection to the souls of the faithful, and assists them more materially, than the Angels could ever do.

Finally, that alliance between man and woman, for the propagation of the human race, was, by virtue of the Redemption, not only to attain the original dignity with which God invested it in Paradise, but was also raised to the dignity of a Sacrament; that is, sanctifying the married persons and typifying the Union of Christ with His Church.

Yes, O Lord, Thou' hast redeemed us with a plentiful, a superabundant Redemption, as the sight and dedication of every temple of God especially and solemnly reminds us!

May every Christian show himself grateful for this gift by the overflowing affections of his heart, and prove his gratitude by the zeal he has to lead a holy life, and by a faithful correspondence to the graces which he receives as a child of his Holy Mother the Church.—Amen!

THIRD SERMON.

"You are God's building."—1 Cor. iii, 9.

EVERY Church, designed for the service of God, is a representation of Christ's own Church, and an image of the Kingdom of God within us. Just as the building dedicated to God is distinguished by certain marks from all other buildings, so, too, the children of God must bear about them certain signs by which they can be easily known from unbelievers. These features must be such as to show the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

Let us consider the resemblance which a Christian soul bears to a Christian temple; and in studying the exterior and inner parts of the material structure, we will try to learn their correspondence with the acts of worship that flow from the heart and intellect of the followers of Christ. Nor will our reflection be fruitless of good, for we will discover that there is a striking parity between the structure of wood or stone and the immortal temple made by the hands of God: that the resemblance is borne out part for part in each.

A house of God possesses height, length, and breadth. Besides, it stands on a foundation, and its interior is embellished with altars, pulpits, confessionals, while round its walls hang beautiful paintings. If it have pretensions to grandeur, its vaulted roof rests on pillars of marble, while above the roof there tapers,

heavenward, a spire whence issue the sweet harmonies of a chime of bells.

Let us call to mind to-day the holy meaning of these properties of a Church in relation to the Kingdom of God in our hearts, so that we may become and remain real living temples of God.

O Mary, whose sacred image is found in every Church, thou fair temple of the Holy Ghost, grant that our hearts may become as thine, and that such virtues and dispositions as adorned thy soul in the temple of Sion may ornament our hearts.

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, to the greater glory of God!

I said that every building raised to the honor and service of God should be to us a type of the qualities of the temple of God within us, and also an incentive to make our lives such that the words of the Apostle may be verified in us: "Know you not that your members are the temples of the Holy Ghost, who is in you?"

Let us begin our comparisons. What is the *foundation* of the temple within us? It is Faith, cemented and made strong by great humility of heart, through which we submit our understanding to the doctrines of our holy religion. This faith becomes capable of supporting the edifice, which is to be the abode of God for all eternity, when it is laid far

down in the depths of *humility*; in fact, it is then that this faith becomes efficacious, and it must have this mark in order to be pleasing to God. We can not lay this foundation without the help of God; and this help, in the work of building, is Grace. Without this we can do nothing. But God gives His grace only to the humble; hence the conclusion is manifest.

Peter is the rock upon which is built the Church of Christ, and on *Peter*, too, is built our temple—that is to say, it is supported by obedience, love, and fidelity, to the only true Church, the *Holy Roman Catholic Church*, whose foundation is Peter. The love and attachment to her is a proof that the Kingdom of God is within us, and that we are true temples of God.

“May I forget my right hand if I forget thee, O Church of Rome,” cried out St. Augustine.

Every willful deviation from the doctrines of the Roman Church shakes the foundation of God’s temple within us; the house of the Lord crumbles, and only shapeless ruins remain!

The *height* of the Church figures what should be the loftiness of our desires and *hopes*. “If you have risen with Christ, seek that which is above,” says St. Paul. It tells us that our thoughts should ever be of heaven, and that our exertions should be constantly directed to the attainment of eternal happiness, whilst it reminds us of the character that should distinguish the true children of God from the children of the world.

The roof of the Church, resting upon the solid walls, is emblematic of the imperishable promises of

Christ to His Church, picturing the crown of immortal glory, which shall be put upon every true child of hers in the city of God, and which has already been granted to many of our departed friends.

The *width* of the Church represents the far-reaching *love of God*, and, besides, reminds us of the great charity that we should bear to our *neighbor*, if we desire to be true temples of God.

The *length* symbolizes the *constancy* with which we are to persevere in the practice of virtue and pursue the vocation assigned us by God, for "he alone will be saved who persevereth unto the end."

The *cross* crowning the spire ever holds before our minds the fact that the Kingdom of God is within us, in so far as we love the cross—the Church itself, especially if it be of Gothic style, is cruciform in shape, and again impresses upon us the truth that the religion of Christ is the Gospel of the cross.

The *four walls* rising from the foundation to the roof, picture the four *cardinal virtues*, without which the edifice of virtue is not properly put together, and without the exercise of which, it is clear, that the virtue we practice is not real virtue; they are *prudence, temperance, justice, and fortitude*. Moreover, unless these virtues are genuine, we can not clearly see the end, which we must endeavor to attain; nor can we, if we put aside these virtues, make use of the right means to obtain our end; for we will be guilty of exaggeration, of injury to fraternal charity, as regards his goods, his honor, or his actions before God and man. In a

word, without these we could not keep on steadily in our course to salvation.

The *pillars* that support the roof of a Church must stand upon good foundations; must be solid and in proportion. So, too, in our inner temple we must find pillars that strengthen the edifice: viz., the *eight beatitudes*:

“Blessed are the poor in spirit. Blessed are the meek. Blessed are they that mourn. Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice. Blessed are the clean of heart. Blessed are the peace-makers. Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice’ sake.”

Often, in the course of our lives, we put partly into practice the eight beatitudes, but not in a sufficient manner. We show that our inner temple is held up by those pillars; but, alas, how often must we not acknowledge their unfitness for the purpose intended! Why is this? Because they are not so much founded on faith as on a mere natural inclination to this or that virtue; and natural virtues can not stand the shock of great temptations.

To urge us on to attain the fulfillment of these promises, Christ tells us: “I and My Father will take up our abode in such a soul.”

Our love of *Jesus Christ* must ever burn before the tabernacle like the *lamp* of the sanctuary, as a sign of our everlasting remembrance of Him, from the moment of our awakening till that of retiring to rest. “*All for Jesus!*”

Moreover, the spirit of prayer must pervade our life in the manner suggested to us by the house of God, which is ever open, day and night, presenting itself to us as a sacred abode of prayer. Every good Christian that enters therein betakes himself immediately to that sacred occupation in order to honor God, thank Him, praise Him, and love Him.

This spirit of perpetual prayer changes our interior into a temple of God, making it holy and worthy of the Most High.

The *spire* rising above the Church, and the chime of bells, tells us that it is not enough to have the Kingdom of God within us, but that it is also our duty to induce our neighbor, to the best of our power, to become God's temple for the love of Him, and to bear in his life the marks of this love. This we achieve by showing good example at all times and in all places.

The lives of the Saints stand forth in the Church like so many spires in the city of God, and call out to the children of men: We have reached sanctity; why can you not do likewise?

Spires are not always solid, though they seem to be. So it often happens that deeds which seem to us to be virtue, are only its semblance; those acts are the mere outcome of stubbornness, self-love, and a purely natural inclination. They are not polished off by the love of God and our neighbor; nor are they free from the influence of places and persons.

In the interior of the Church stands the Altar.

Around it center all ceremonies of religious worship. It is the stone of sacrifice upon which Christ daily offers Himself as a *holocaust* for men. The *altar* in our soul is our spirit of self-sacrifice, our willingness to yield up all for Christ, and to shed our heart's blood for His sake.

Nor does the *pulpit* fail to convey its lesson. From it are announced the words of salvation, which enable us to give an account of our faith, as the prophet foretold that the true children of the New Law were to do, and as, indeed, was done by the primitive Christians.

The *confessional* symbolizes the contrition we should have for our past vices and the many imperfections into which we daily fall, and should cleanse our hearts.

The special object of our loving veneration must be the *tabernacle*, in which Christ is ever present in the most Holy Sacrament of the altar. We must ever be mindful of His continual presence; and this thought should occupy our minds in our visits to Him, both when assisting at Mass and when approaching Holy Communion. These two latter practices are the pulses that indicate the state of our Catholic life.

This intercourse with Christ in the holy Eucharist, more than all other means, is the one best suited to change our interior into a temple of God.

The sight of the Church and the sound of the bells become more beautiful and impressive when saints, in so many different vocations and conditions of life, tell us that they have reached perfection and

great merits **by** the good example they have given to the **world**.

As in the course of the year our Churches are adorned more richly on feast-days, and the peal of the bells rings out more solemnly, so, too, should we, children of the Church, celebrate her feasts with more than ordinary care and devotion.

This is the resemblance between the outer Church and the temple of our hearts. Remember it often.—
Amen.

FEAST OF ALL SAINTS.

FIRST SERMON.

“And they sang the canticle of Moses, the servant of God.”—Apoc. xv.

IF on to-day's festival we think of the communion of the Saints in heaven, we will undoubtedly exclaim within our soul: “Oh, what a joy, what an ecstasy of delight will there be in heaven on this glorious feast!”

And what is it that incites the hearts of our brethren in heaven to such holy rejoicings? Ah, it is the remembrance of their victory—the victory which, while on earth, they gained over Satan, the world, and their own evil inclinations! They lived for heaven, fought for heaven, and gained heaven. Their joy, then, is a victor's joy, the greatest and sincerest of all the delights which can be tasted by the heart of man.

To show that in truth, on this day, an unbounded joy reigns in heaven, we need but remind you of the description which the seer St. John, in the island of Patmos, gives us of the city of God. “And I heard them,” he says, “singing the canticle of Moses, the servant of God.” It was the re-echo of that canticle which the children of Israel entoned on the shores of

the Red Sea after God had destroyed Pharaoh, with all his warriors.

By saying that the Blessed sang the canticle of Moses, St. John wants to represent to us the indescribable sweetness and grandeur of the canticle of *Victory* which the Blessed in heaven chant before the throne of the Almighty.

I want to explain to-day to you the meaning of this Canticle of Moses sung in Heaven.

O Mary, Queen of Saints, lead us to victory in our battle on earth, that we may entone once the joyful songs of Saints and Angels with thee in Heaven!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, for the greater glory of God!

The joy that fills the hearts of victorious warriors is proportioned not only to the number and power of the conquered, but also to the previous danger of defeat, to the misery and wretchedness that would have resulted from the enemy's victory, and, finally, to the positive good following its overthrow.

Now, in the case of the victorious Israelites, all these motives of joy were united in a higher degree than in any earthly victors before them; and yet the joyful songs of Israel can not even be compared with the heavenly hymns in which Saints and Angels give honor and praise and thanks to God for their good fight and their glorious victory.

In the first place, the *mighty* number and dreadful

power of the conquered enemy, as well as the victor's *narrow escape* from defeat, increase and intensify the joy of a victorious army. How great, then, must have been the joy of the Israelites!

It was a dark night; the Egyptians had urged the Israelites to leave in haste. The latter had hurried away without even thinking of war and battle. Suddenly they see an approaching cloud of dust. Pharaoh, with his mighty army—horse, foot, and chariot—is at their heels. The Israelites have no arms; the cries of their wives and children urge them to try their utmost to seek safety in flight. But even this is in vain, for before them they see nothing but an immense expanse of water.

But now Moses says to the people: "Fear not; stand and see the great wonders of the Lord which He will do this day; for the Egyptians whom you see now, you shall see no more forever."

He then stretches out his hand—the waters of the Red Sea are divided, a warm wind dries the bottom, and the Israelites pass through, followed by Pharaoh with hundreds of thousands of armed warriors. But the eye of the Lord watches and looks down on them from above. The horses of the Egyptians are frightened, the wheels fall from the chariots, the waters sweep down in floods over the heads of the sons of Egypt, and, to a man, they are swallowed up in the depths of the sea.

At dawn the bodies of the drowned Egyptians float on the waters, and Israel, with its six hundred thou-

sand men and many hundred thousand women, raises its voice and sings before the Lord a song of thanks and praise.

But, however great the praises and thanks of a nation saved from immediate destruction may have been, they are like sounding brass when compared with the hymns of victory which the Saints entone in the house of their heavenly Father. For each and every saved soul has had to fight against all the powers of hell, against numberless fallen angels and their associates, the world and the flesh. But now all enemies are crushed, and peace reigns eternally.

Besides, we must consider the great dangers that threatened the Saints while alive. "Sister," said a blessed soul, in an apparition, to a friend of hers—"Sister, I am saved. But it is only now that I understand the dangers of life. At times, in certain temptations and occasions of sin, I had hair-breadth escapes from hell. If the Lord in His endless mercy had not stretched out His saving hand to me then, I should now be buried in the eternal flames. But now, no more enemies, no more dangers; my soul sings eternal praises to the Lord."

From Pharaoh and the Egyptians, indeed, the children of Israel had nothing more to fear. But were they equally sure that no other hostile powers would oppose their way to the land of promise?

No care of this sort overshadows the happiness of the Saints. All is secure for them, and they are free forever from dangers and enemies.

The joy of victory increases if the victory sets the victors free from the miseries and wretchedness of a painful life. Think of a people of *slaves* that fights for liberty from tyranny and despotism, and you have a picture of the situation of the Israelites. Up to that time they had served as slaves in labor and hardship, and what would not have been their lot had they been brought back to Egypt not merely as slaves, but also as enemies and prisoners of war!

Victory dispelled all these anxieties. "The Lord is a warrior. Almighty is His name. Pharaoh's chariots and his army He hath cast into the sea; his chosen captains are drowned in the Red Sea. Who is like to Thee among the strong, O Lord? who is like to Thee, glorious in holiness, terrible and praiseworthy, doing wonders?"

Joyous though this canticle of Israel be, it can not compare with the strains of the Blessed: "The former things are passed away; God has wiped away all tears from the eyes of His servants; and death is now no more, nor mourning, nor weeping, nor sorrow is any more."

The bonds of Egypt indeed have been broken, but new troubles, new anxieties arise for the children of Israel. They have before them a long journey through the desert; and even when this journey is happily completed, they will live only in another part of the same earth that has been cursed by its own Maker: "Thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to thee, and in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread." The

Saints, on the contrary, have entered a land where there is not a shadow of pain nor any fear of hardship.

Another source of joy in victory is the *positive good* we have gained. What is not our joy when we acquire some temporal good, new possessions, fresh honors, or influence over new nations! Such was the joy of the Israelites. Freed from the bonds of Egypt, they were to enter the land of promise, the land flowing with milk and honey. But however rich Chanaan may have been, it still was, like the rest of the earth, a valley of tears. Its mightiest king, while enjoying more riches, honors, and pleasures than any mortal before or after, cried out from the depths of his burdened heart: "Vanity of vanities, and all is vanity."

How different are the joys of the Blessed in Heaven! They enjoy riches and pleasures of which the Apostle says: "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive what things God hath prepared for them that love him." Heaven is the Society of Saints and Angels, of Jesus and Mary. God Himself says: "At the fountain of waters I will give them drink, and I will be their God, and they shall be My sons."

Heaven, then, is God Himself. The Saints see God face to face, they possess God, they become like unto God in the light of glory, and in peace and love they remain glorified with God forever. How can we, then, suppose this joy to be equaled by the joy of the children of Israel? For even supposing the Israelites

should have found a perfect earthly happiness in their promised land, they still had the *graves* of Adam and Eve and of all the Patriarchs, reminding them that soon they, too, should rest in the grave and molder into the dust from which they had been framed. But the bliss of the Saints lasts eternally, and their joyful Alleluias resound forever.

And even considering their respective numbers, the joys and songs of the Israelites remain far behind the jubilation of the Saints. The Israelites amounted to six hundred thousand men, with a number of women and children in proportion. The number of the Blessed is indicated by St. John: "After this I saw a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations and tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne, and in sight of the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and they cried with a loud voice, saying: Salvation to our God, Who sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb."

And, besides all this, if we consider the immense joys of the Blessed, that result from the continual increase of their number by the arrival of souls from the Church suffering, who does not feel the intense struggling for utterance!

Oh, that I, too, were among the number of the Blessed! that I were at least certain of my eternal happiness! But we are certain of our eternal salvation if we only follow the example of the Saints; if we avoid sin; if we are faithful in our daily duties. On these conditions we too, even, perhaps before the

next Feast of All Saints, shall unite our voices with those of the Blessed ; we too, crowned by our Lord Jesus Christ, shall triumph among the bands of the Saints and Angels.

The Israelites went forth out of Egypt. They killed a Paschal lamb, with the blood of which they signed their doors ; they stood and ate hastily, with shoes on their feet and staves in their hands. On their journey they followed a cloud of fire, and were nourished with manna.

Now, each of these circumstances is symbolical. If we wish to attain the joys of Heaven we must wash ourselves in the blood of the Lamb ; we must leave the fleshpots of Egypt—that is, the world, with its pleasures ; we must stand upright—that is, our hearts must be free from earthly desires ; we must gird ourselves with the spirit of self-denial. Continual thought of approaching *Eternity* must be the staff to guard us through life. The light of faith is our cloud of fire. Occasions and temptations to sin must be passed through by us as the Red Sea was by the Israelites. On our way through life we must nourish ourselves not with earthly manna, indeed, but with the heavenly—I mean the Eucharist.

Let us be ready ; we are warned, and soon we shall take part in the triumph of All Saints, singing with them the canticle of Moses amid the Alleluias of all heavenly hosts.—Amen !

SECOND SERMON.

“Considering the end of their conversation, follow their faith.”—Heb
xiii, 7.

WHEN one lives in distress, and hears of the happiness of others, he naturally asks himself the question: How is it that, although born of parents of the most humble condition, he is held in such high honor, and is esteemed by so many? Thus we hear of an Emperor, once a swine-herd; of a Pope, the son of a carpenter. And how many similar examples do we not witness in America? Men of low birth have worked themselves up to the highest dignities of the State; and many from beggars have become millionaires. Here again the thought naturally suggests itself: How did their success begin? How did they manage to succeed so well?

Hence it is that, looking into heaven in spirit, and thinking upon those who have entered that happy abode, this question will also force itself upon us: What were the thoughts that occupied the minds of the Saints while here on earth? What means did they employ to attain such a degree of Christian perfection?

I say to you: *Ask the Saints, and they will answer you from heaven.*

How fitting it is to examine the motives that actuated their works, and guided them to the land of promise! Can there, indeed, be one more appropriate to the day?

O Mary, Queen of all Saints, Mirror of Justice, obtain for us the favor of the Saints, that we may follow their example and become holy!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, to the greater honor of God!

When we name the Saints and speak of them, we do not seem to consider them as ordinary beings, but rather as more than mortal, whom God has raised to more than human perfection. Yet this is not altogether the case. The Saints were men as we are. They were children of Adam, born in sin, and subject to the stain of original sin, as we all have been. As they grew in age, they were not free from temptation. They were frail children of Adam, who, as St. Paul declares, felt in themselves the sting of concupiscence, and were exposed to the dangers of being lost forever.

They lived as ordinary men, and yet their lives were extraordinary. What was ordinary in them, and belonged to their state of life, was not done in a common way, but rather in a perfect and holy manner. Why this difference? I answer: Because they lived in the full resoluteness of those principles that faith taught them, and were more faithful in observing them than we are. You may ask: What are those *principles*? I answer: Ask the Saints themselves, they will tell you from above.

Speak, ye Saints of God, you holy—[*name of patrons of this Church, etc.*]*—*and all ye Saints! What

did ye meditate upon that your lives became so holy? Listen to-day to the answer from heaven.

Our thought was: *I serve God*. Do ye hear? Think on this, and you, too, will lead a holy life. Why? Because God is infinite perfection, and deserves an infinite homage. Indeed, no mortal, nay, not even Mary herself, can give this homage to God. The blessed Manhood of Christ, in hypostatic union with His Divinity, is alone capable of rendering to the Father the adoration due to Him. What lesson does this teach us? It teaches us that, though we had the ardor of Mary, and of all the Saints, we would still be obliged to acknowledge before God: I am a useless servant. My God, to Thee belongs a much greater zeal in Thy service than we can give.

Ye Saints, what made you so holy? Listen to the answer: Our thought was, *God sees me*.

Think on this as did the Saints, walk constantly according to their example, in the presence of God, and, as they did, so will you live holy. God Himself assured us of this when He said to Abraham: "Walk before Me and be perfect." Try this! Walk only one entire day in the presence of God, and say to yourselves, ten, twenty times a day, at the beginning and the end of your work: God sees me! and the inspirations of the Holy Ghost will be multiplied within you, and urge you to live in a holy manner. You will be inspired to make good resolutions, and will receive strength to live according to them.

Ye Saints of God, what made you so holy, so ear-

nest, and humble in the service of God? Hear the answer: The thought that filled our mind was what I do, *I do it for God.*

Do you likewise think of this with the same assiduity, and you, too, will live holy in the strength and vigor of a pure intention.

This is done even in the world. Whosoever does any thing for a dignitary of this earth—for a Lord, a King, or an Enperor—on whose kindness depends the happiness of this whole life, that man certainly will make all possible endeavors to do his work as perfectly as he can, so that it may be presentable to this Lord, King, Ruler, or Benefactor.

Ye Saints of God, what made you so holy? Listen to the answer: It is this thought: either I must become holy and go to *heaven*, or I shall be *damned*. Either I must live in grace, and be in the company of the blessed, or I shall fall into sin, perish, and be numbered with the throngs of evil spirits and condemned sinners. "Not to go forward in the way of perfection is to go backward," St. Bernard says. Whoever does not swim against the stream, him the stream will sweep along in its course. If I do not become entirely holy in life, though I should die in the state of grace, the fires of Purgatory must cleanse me unto holiness. Hence it is better to labor and suffer meritoriously now, than to endure great torments without merit hereafter.

And mark this well. Perhaps none of you have ever thought of it. And still it is one of the teach-

ings of the Church upon which the Saints continually meditated. Should we not reach the degree of sanctity to which God calls us as the Saints did, who are now raised to the honors of the altar, we may run the risk of being lost forever.

For you it may be either to be high in heaven, or not to be there at all. Remember Judas. He was either to have a place in heaven among the Apostles, or to be excluded altogether from the company of the Saints. The degree of holiness, which corresponds to this glory, depends, perhaps, upon one proffered grace—upon the use or abuse we make of it. A chain, be it the longest, if one link is missing, is falling.

It is the assurance of the Lord, Who said: "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a mustard seed." The lives of the Saints bear testimony to this.

In their lives things apparently small took place; and had they not, on those occasions, listened to the inspirations of grace, they would never have become such great Saints; nay, perhaps they would have been lost.

Call to mind St. Anthony. Had he not listened to the inspiration of God, which said: "Go to Mass to-day;" had he not heard the words of the Gospel: "If thou wilt be perfect, sell what thou hast, give it to the poor, and follow Me," he would likely have remained, during life, in the possession of his worldly goods; would have set his mind on gold; would not have retired to the desert, and would never have become the patriarch of innumerable Saints. The woes of riches

would have befallen him; and, mayhap, he would be now a reprobate. Behold the mustard seed! Likewise, had John of God not listened to the inspiration: "Go to-day to the sermon;" had he not done it on that particular day; had he not heard that sermon, which made him a Saint instantaneously, although he was a sinner when he entered the church,—I ask, would he be a Saint to-day, or would he not rather be among the damned?

Do you know to which grace God has attached your salvation? \ *You do not.* Therefore, make use of every grace which the Lord offers you. Do this, and you will be holy.

Ye Saints of God, what made you holy? Listen to the answer: This thought,—The more assiduous I am, the better and lighter becomes the work, and the greater the merit thereof. Think on this, and you, too, will acquire merit, as did the Saints, and gather full sheaves for the granary of heaven.

Ye Saints, what made you so holy? Listen to the answer: This was our reflection,—Life is but one. Only once have I the opportunity to reap merits for heaven. *Now, or never!* Oh, what an all-important principle!

Not without a special dispensation of divine Providence does the Feast of All Saints precede that of All Souls,—that reminder of certain death,—that reminder of the fleeting nature of time! Death and time cease together! The harvest is over! Eternity begins!

"Yes, time, thou art precious as God Himself,"

cried St. Chrysostom,—for time is the only means by which we can insure our union with God forever, and increase His glory. Were we able to see every evening all the crowns that we have lost during the day, not only because we have sinned, but because we have not made use of all the hours and minutes of the day in the service of God,—with what fervor would we not live the following day!

Hence, think daily of your last hour, and ask yourself: When the moment comes, and my heart beats for the last time, how would I then desire to have spent my life? *Holily!* But then it will be too late! Now, I have it in my power; but then, as my life has been, so will be my death! If I have lived in lukewarmness, the pangs of the tepid Christian at death await me! On the contrary, if I have lived with the zeal of the Saints, then will I certainly die the precious and consoling death of the just. May be, a death even without Purgatory.

Ye Saints, what made you so holy? Oh, we thought, if I die holily, I shall go straight to heaven. My judgment shall be without judgment, and I shall hear the invitation of the Lord: “Enter thou into My joy.”

Finally, the Saints of heaven ask us: Why do you question us so often? Children of men, do you not know where we are? In the kingdom of recompense! Should we be sorry for any thing, it would be that we did not live more holily, and did not labor and suffer more for heaven.

But you may ask: Must I not then receive special

grace from God to live thus? I answer: And thou shalt have it, if thou prayest for it with an upright heart; not, indeed, because of thy own merits, but because of the infinite merits of Christ.

All depends on this: That thou be, at present, as earnest and sincere as the Saints. Then wilt thou be able to say before God: Lord, Thou seest my heart; I am in earnest; I have said it, now do I begin, and I will live up to the principles of the Saints. Give me Thy efficacious grace.

May all the Saints intercede for us, that we may obtain these graces. All heaven says: Amen! Amen!

THIRD SERMON.

“Your reward is very great in heaven.”—Matt. v, 12.

SHOULD we desire, in some measure, to anticipate the fullness of the bliss that the Saints enjoy in heaven, we need only recall to mind what Faith teaches us concerning the joy and happiness of Heaven. In this consideration, let us follow the advice of St. Paul, and, even while upon earth, gaze, as in a mirror, upon the joys of heaven; and we will understand that all the joys of this world are likewise found in heaven, but in an immeasurably higher degree.

And still there are Christians who think and say: “There is a heaven; but, alas, how little we know of it, and of what is therein contained!” What a delusion! I say, on the contrary: “We know enough, and so much, indeed, that it is inconceivable how, when once we have earnestly reflected on what Faith teaches us about heaven, we do not continually carry the thought of that blessed abode in our minds, live for heaven, long for heaven, and exclaim, with holy David: “Who will give me wings like a dove, and I will fly and be at rest? Woe is me that my sojourn is prolonged! When, when, O Lord, shall I stand in Thy presence?”

In order to see this truth more clearly, we need but question the Saints themselves, upon whose exultation we are meditating.

"Where are ye?" They will give us their answer from heaven.

○ Mary, thou, whose joy is above that of all the Angels and Saints in the bliss of heaven, assist us, that we may one day share that joy in the communion of all the Saints!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, to the greater glory of God!

It happened once that an aged servant of God met a man who seemed to be entirely buried in grief, and said to him: "Art thou a Christian? Dost thou believe that there is a heaven awaiting thee? If so, how canst thou mourn? Let them grieve who never have heard of heaven! Let them be downcast who do not believe in heaven!"

To appreciate this truth, it is merely necessary to reflect on where the Saints of God are, and to consider the bliss they there enjoy; for all the happiness they enjoy is within our reach.

And, as life is so short and heaven our approaching destiny forever, is it not proper that we ask the Saints to-day: "Where are ye?" Listen to their answer as it descends from heaven: "We are in the land of *promise*; in the land where many meet and none do part. What joy when we found there those whom we loved on earth, who served God with us, whom death had torn from us, and with whom we now enjoy life ever-

lasting!" Dost thou hear this, afflicted soul? Hast thou lost relatives and acquaintances? Hast thou the hope that they died a holy death? Console thyself! Rejoice and sing the jubilee of the Saints! Soon thou wilt see them again.

"Ye Saints of God, where are ye?" Listen to their answer: "We are in *paradise*. We behold the good things of the Lord in the land of the living." Paradise means that part of creation which expands over the regions of the starry firmament.

There is a proverb which says: "See Naples and die." Still, what is Naples? What is the beauty of the earth, even in its most charming spot? All these, in God's sight, are as thistles and thorns—the husks with which He feeds the sinner for the little moral good he does during life.

A God, infinitely beautiful, blessed, and at the same time Almighty, is able to create more than the dust of this world. Yet, even of this earthly home, how little do we possess! Poor man, do you hear the call from heaven? "The heavens are mine; all mine." Thus shalt thou, too, soon cry out. Rejoice and be jubilant, and cry to the Saints: We come soon, soon!

"Where are ye, Saints of God?" Hear their answer from heaven: "We are in the kingdom of *reward*." The greatness of which reward no eye hath seen, nor ear heard; neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive. Oh, too much, too much! Thus exult the Saints. They are in the land of *joy*, of

perfect joy; and there is no shadow of sorrow, no grief, no misery, forever.

"I heard a voice from the throne, which said: There shall be neither suffering, nor complaining, nor misery, nor want, nor separation, nor death. What was, has gone by. The Lord has dried the tears from the eyes of His own forever." Thus writes St. John, who, in ecstasies, had got a glimpse of heaven.

Child of man, is it labor that weighs thee down, is it sickness, grief, persecution, that embitters thy life? Think on heaven. Soon thou wilt be in the kingdom of *reward* and *joy*. Persevere, and thou shalt enter forever into the joy of the Lord. Oh, what a consolation! Yes, ye Saints, we come soon to the kingdom of joy.

"Where are ye, ye Saints?" Hear the answer from heaven: "We enjoy the communion of all the *Angels* and *Saints*—we entered into the communion of their blessedness and glory." Nor is this all, for the Lord not only rewards every one according to his works, but there is also a participation of each in the bliss of all.

Hearst thou, O melancholy soul? What is it that casts thee down? Art thou alone and abandoned on earth? Are all whom thou lovest and who were dear to thee dead? Soon thou, also, wilt sing thy canticle of joy in heaven: "I see all the Angels, the Archangels, the Principalities, the Powers, the Virtues, the Dominations, the Thrones, the Cherubim, the Seraphim, and I enter into the bliss and love of all the holy

Virgins, Confessors and Martyrs, of the Patriarchs and Prophets, of the beloved Apostle of Christ, St. John, and of St. Joseph? Why should I bewail you, ye holy acquaintances and relatives? Soon will I share with you your everlasting joy."

"Where are ye now, ye Saints of God?" "With *Mary* and *Jesus*," echoes the answer. "What is mine is thine:" thus cries Mary to every saved child of hers, and Jesus fulfills His promise: "To the victor I will give to sit with Me on My throne."

"Where are ye, ye Saints of God?" Hear the answer: "Near God, with God, in God." "I Myself," says the Almighty, "am thy reward exceeding great." Remember this: God, the never-ending happiness, shall soon be thy lot and portion; and, oh, in what a union! There is no expression for it in human language.

"We shall see Him as He is," as St. John tells us. "They shall be like God," says Christ Himself.

Christian soul, how canst thou grieve, when thou thinkest on the jubilee of the Saints, which thou art soon to share? Hear their call from heaven: "We see God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost." Thus they shout in thunders of Alleluias: "We are now united to God, submerged in the never-ending power, wisdom, holiness, mercy, truth, majesty, and magnificence of God, and lost in His infinite beauty and blessedness and love. We are one with God as His godlike representations."

I will give you an illustration: Suppose an acquaint-

ance, a father, brother, friend, or bridegroom were to come from afar, and you did not know it, and he were to stand at the door behind a curtain. You can not see him, but there is in the room a mirror, in which his image is reflected. Looking at the mirror, you would cry out: "Oh, it is my father, brother, friend, or husband!"

Were it possible for this man to impart his life to the image shadowed in the mirror, we could say, at once: "It is he!" This mirror in heaven is the light of glory, in which the soul sees the image of God reflected, of Whose divine life she now partakes. Oh, what a place of divine bliss!

Christian soul, when thou takest seriously to heart the answer that the Saints have just given from heaven, then must thou say: "Beautiful heaven, thee must I possess, cost what it may—labor, suffering, blood, and life itself. How glad must thou not be if thou reflectest that it depends on thee alone to become truly holy. Sin is the only hinderance that presents itself in thy way. But there is neither man nor devil capable of forcing thee to sin. Man is free, and with the grace of God is stronger than the whole world, and all flesh, nay, even stronger than hell itself.

Of like strength is virtue, which we must practise, in order to multiply our joys in heaven. It is true that men and hell are able to prevent us from fulfilling this or that work of virtue and zeal: but nothing in the world can hinder us from doing God's will,

from so doing what He expects of us, that we may go forward, meritoriously, on the path of Christian perfection. These practices of virtue are presented to us in the words of Christ Himself, words that the Church repeats to us in the gospel of to-day, the feast of All Saints: "Blessed are the poor in spirit. Blessed are the meek. Blessed are they that mourn. Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice. Blessed are the clean of heart. Blessed are the merciful. Blessed are the peace-makers. Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice' sake. Exceedingly great is their reward in heaven." It is Christ Himself who gives us this assurance.

Live up to these eight beatitudes, after the example of the Saints on earth, and soon shalt thou rejoice in communion with them in heaven through Him, the King of All Saints.—Amen.

FEAST OF ALL SOULS.

FIRST SERMON.

“When shall I come and appear before the face of God?”—Psalms xli, 3.

ON the Feast of All Souls, and whenever we are reminded of Purgatory, we can not help thinking of the dreadful pains which the souls in Purgatory have to suffer, in order to be purified from every stain of sin; of the excruciating torments they have to undergo for their faults and imperfections, and how thoroughly they have to atone for the least offenses committed against the infinite holiness and justice of God.

It is but just, therefore, that we should condole with them, and do all that we can to deliver them from the flames of Purgatory, or, at least, to soothe their pains.

Sufferings, however, are not the only cause which renders the state of the poor souls deplorable in our eyes, and moves us to commiseration. There is yet another reason, which, though it occurs less frequently to our minds, yet, if duly considered, will prove a powerful incentive to charitable exertion in behalf of the souls of our departed brethren. I allude to their ardent *yearning* for God, and their sincere desire of being united with Him forever in heaven; a desire, which as long as it is not satisfied, will be no less painful to them than the keenest flames of their place of torture. We should, then, with the same eagerness with

which we try to deliver the poor souls from the pain of fire, endeavor to obtain for them the accomplishment of their ardent longing to be united with their heavenly Spouse. I say:

All that can increase the pain of desire and eager yearning in our hearts, makes the longing of the poor souls after God and heaven immeasurably great and tormenting.

Let us now reflect on this, and endeavor, if possible, to open for them to-day the gates of their heavenly home.

O Mary, Mother of mercy, obtain for us the grace to hasten to the relief of thy suffering children in Purgatory, and to offer them, even this day, to thy maternal embrace!

I address you, dear Christians, in the name of Jesus, to the greater glory of God!

Theologians rightly maintain that the pain of the damned in hell is a twofold one—namely, that of *fire* and that of *loss* of the beatific vision or contemplation of the unveiled splendor of the Divinity and the other delights of heaven.

This last pain torments the damned still more, increases their sorrow and despair to a higher degree than all the suffering which they undergo in the expiating flames.

Now, in like manner is the agony of the souls in Purgatory twofold—namely: the pain of the purifying

flames; and of the *delay* in beholding God and enjoying the other pleasures that await them in heaven. To comprehend this more clearly, we need but consider the pain which an ardent *longing* for that which is most dear to us produces in our hearts, as long as it is withheld from us, and then compare our state with that of the poor afflicted souls.

The first source or cause of a desire to be delivered from any state in life is, when that state is connected with great embarrassment and *afflictions*. Hence it is that the sick long so eagerly for the presence of the physician and for the medicine that will cure them; in like manner the starving long for bread and nourishment; the thirsty, for water; the poor, for the sentence of the judge, that will declare them heirs to riches, and save them from destitution. So also does the wayfarer upon the billows of the stormy ocean sigh for the port, yearn to reach the place where a happy future awaits him; and so does the prisoner in his dreary cell anxiously expect the hour of his delivery. How great, therefore, must not be the desire of the poor souls to be ransomed from Purgatory.

The fire of Purgatory, as the doctors of the Church declare, is as intense as that of the abode of hell; with this difference, that it has an end. Yea! it may be that to-day a soul in Purgatory is undergoing more agony, more excruciating suffering than a damned soul, which is tormented in hell for a few mortal sins; while the poor soul in Purgatory must satisfy for millions of venial sins.

All the pains which afflict the sick upon earth, added to all that the martyrs have ever suffered, can not be compared with those of purgatory, so great is the punishment of those poor souls.

We read, how once a sick person who was very impatient in his sufferings, exclaimed: "O God, take me from this world!" Thereupon the Guardian Angel appeared to him, and told him to remember that, by patiently bearing his afflictions upon his sick-bed, he could satisfy for his sins and shorten his Purgatory. But the sick man replied that he chose rather to satisfy for his sins in Purgatory.

The poor sufferer died; and, behold, his Guardian Angel appeared to him again, and asked him if he did not repent of the choice he had made of satisfying for his sins in Purgatory by tortures rather than upon earth by afflictions? Thereupon the poor soul asked of the Angel: "How many years am I now here in these terrible flames?" The Angel replied: "How many years? Thy body upon earth is not yet buried; nay, it is not yet cold, and still thou believest already thou art here for many years!" Oh, how that soul lamented upon hearing this. Great indeed was its grief for not having chosen patiently to undergo upon earth the sufferings of sickness, and thereby shorten its Purgatory.

In that abode of sorrow the departed souls *hunger* after the possession of God, and with so famishing a desire that nothing on earth can be compared with it. They *thirst* after the fountain of eternal life with that

thirst which knows no comparison in this world. They suffer ; poor and destitute of all worldly goods. Yea ! they are even deprived of all those consolations which at times lessen our desires, and afford us moments of repose.

Here upon earth, though we long and sigh ever so much after a thing, still we can *sleep* ; and the pains produced by our heart's desires in our waking moments leave us, we feel them no longer. We can engage ourselves in other *occupations* ; other cares may distract our minds. We may, at times, enjoy various *pleasures*, and partake of the good things of this life. Now all these things remove, or, at least, soothe the pain and care of our desires. Not so, however, is the condition of these distressed souls. They have no refreshing slumber ; they are incessantly awake ; they have no occupation ; they can not indulge in other cares, in other distractions. They are *wholly* and *continually* absorbed with the burning desire of being liberated from their intense misery.

Again, upon earth, persons who anxiously seek another abode or another state of life, often know not whether, perhaps, they may not fall into a more wretched condition. How many have forsaken the shores of Europe, with the bright hope of a better future awaiting them in America ? All has been disappointment ! They have repented a thousand times of having deserted their native country. Now, does this disappointment await the souls of Purgatory upon their deliverance ? Ah ! by no means. They *know* too well

that when they are released heaven will be their home. Once there, no more pains, no more fire for them; but the enjoyment of an *everlasting bliss*, which no eye hath seen, nor ear heard; nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive. Such will be their future happy state. Oh, how great is their desire to be already there. Another circumstance which especially intensifies hope in the breast of man, is *intercourse*, union with those who are near and dear to him.

How many, indeed, have bid a last farewell to Europe, where they would have prospered; but oh, then there are awaiting them in another land their beloved ones,—those who are so dear, and in whose midst they long to be! Oh, what a great source of desire is not this, for the poor souls in Purgatory to go to Heaven!

In heaven they shall find again those whom they loved and cherished upon earth, but who have already preceded them on the way to the heavenly mansion. There with their friends shall they share forever untold bliss and glory. Not only will they possess this happiness, but they will, moreover, partake of the glory, blessedness, and love of all the angels and saints. Yea, even Jesus and Mary will share their blessedness with the now happy souls.

There is still another feature, another circumstance which presents itself in the condition of the poor souls in Purgatory. I mean the irresistible force or tendency with which they are drawn towards *God*; the intense longing after Him, their last aim and end.

So long as man is burdened upon earth with his mortal body and its appetites, so long will he not feel this attraction with such intensity. But immediately upon his soul's separation from its mortal frame does it, as the image of God, experience this incomprehensible desire for its Creator and Aim.

Like the balloon that rises aloft as soon as the cords are detached, and rapidly soars higher and higher; just so the soul which leaves this world in the grace of God mounts upward with inconceivable rapidity towards God; and the more pure and spotless she is, the greater is its intensity.

Hence it was that David, filled with an ardent longing after God, sighs aloud: "When, when, O Lord, shall I appear in Thy presence?" Oh, with what intense anxiety and longing is not a poor soul in Purgatory consumed, to behold the splendor of its Lord and Creator!

But also with what marks of *Gratitude* does not every soul whom we have assisted to enter heaven pray for us upon its entrance.

Therefore, let us hasten to the relief of the poor suffering souls in Purgatory. Let us help them to the best of our power, so that they may supplicate for us before the throne of the Most High; that they may remember us when we too shall one day be afflicted in that prison-house of suffering, and may procure for us a speedy release and an early enjoyment of a blissful eternity. Amen!

SECOND SERMON.

“Have pity on me, at least you my friends.”—Job xix, 21.

THAT it is a duty, a truly Christian duty, to help the poor afflicted souls in Purgatory, no one can doubt. We are commanded even as men, but especially as Christians, to love and assist our neighbor as ourselves. But the souls in Purgatory do not cease to be deserving of our love and service because they are in an abode of punishment, for they are still our brethren, and they are the more deserving of prayers as they can not help themselves.

When it will be our turn one day to dwell in those flames, and be separated from God, how happy will we not be if others alleviate and shorten your pains! Do you desire this assistance for your own soul? Then begin in this life, while you have time, to render aid to the poor souls in Purgatory.

As the teachers of Divinity justly observe, all that we can render to the souls in Purgatory is our intercession before God in their behalf. Our heavenly Father accepts our appeal in proportion to their condition in that place of confinement. But he who does not assist others, unto him shall no mercy be shown; for this is what even-handed justice requires. Hence, let us not be deaf to the pitiful cries of the departed ones.

We, moreover, fulfill a duty assigned us the more cheerfully when there are many and weighty motives

for complying with it ; but especially is this the case if we perceive that thereby some advantage accrues to ourselves equal to or greater than that which falls to the share of him whom we assist. Now, that is precisely the case when we help the souls in Purgatory through our prayers and good works, whether we consider ourselves and our own salvation, or the good we render those beloved, but afflicted ones of God.

The main reflection which should be drawn from all that has been said, and which should be deeply engraven upon the mind, is—

That all the pains the poor souls in Purgatory suffer tend to sanctify our own souls, and to shorten hereafter our own misery in the same place of torment.

How this can be accomplished I shall endeavor to explain in the present sermon.

O Mary, Mother of mercy, secure for us the grace of making what we now hear enter deeply into our hearts, in order that, from this day forward, we may hasten to the aid of the souls in Purgatory!

I speak to you in the holy name of Jesus, for the greater glory of God!

I said, that which pains the poor souls in Purgatory tends to sanctify our soul here upon earth, and hereafter to shorten the term of our punishment in the purifying flames of Purgatory.

The first thing that torments the poor souls in Purgatory is the *longing*, the burning desire to behold

God, to be with Christ and Mary, and to be among the number of the Blessed ; in a word, to possess the *joys* of Heaven. This is their constant desire. The hope of one day entering into the mansion of heavenly delights is what makes their stay doubly painful.

Oh, with what torments are not these souls afflicted through their yearning to be with their God ! Were there no other suffering beyond this desire, it alone would be exceedingly agonizing.

Now, this very thought elevates our heart and tends to sanctify our lives. Whence arises the fact that we live so tepidly, so regardless of our Christian duties ? Why are we more anxious to possess the perishable things of the world than to own the everlasting treasures of heaven ? I answer : We think too little of God, of the glorious attributes of His infinite divine perfection ; in brief, we are too careless about our union with God.

Were we steadily to walk in the presence of God, to sigh for Him, oh, how clearly would not such a disposition place before our eyes the misery and heinousness of the smallest sin and imperfection, and thus impel us to shun it forever !

Should we, however, have the misfortune to commit an imperfection or a venial sin, we would without delay, filled with the spirit of penance of a St. Aloysius, banish it from our heart, and thus shorten our Purgatory hereafter.

Again, we betray too little regard for *Jesus*. Were this not the case, oh, how would we not avail ourselves

of His presence in the Most Blessed Sacrament of the Altar to advance our sanctification by repeated visits to that sacred shrine, where He reposes; by devout attendance at Mass; by frequent union with Him in Holy Communion; in fine, by closely following the example of His earthly career.

The same remark may be made of our love for Mary, the Mother of Christ Jesus. How great was not the ardent affection of a blessed Leonard of Port Maurice or a St. Stanislaus, for Mary! It was on account of this filial love for her that they entered without delay into heavenly bliss, for they, living on earth, copied the image of Mary the Mirror of justice.

Yes, should we have had the happiness of worthily wearing the Scapular of Mt. Carmel, through a desire of imitating Mary's virtues, then, as we are informed in the holy Office of the Church, Mary will assist us after our departure from this life, and soon deliver us from Purgatory, to receive us, her dear children, into heaven.

The same observation holds true concerning the yearning of the poor souls in Purgatory to be in the companionship of all the Angels and Saints. We, again, regard too little the image presented to us in the life and actions of the Saints. Were we oftener to recall it to our minds, we would share in the encouraging reflection of St. Augustine while contemplating their lives, and say with him: "If these have done such things, why can not I do the same?"

What is the reason that we, instead of imitating

their zeal for virtue, are content with abstaining from grievous sin only? Ah, we do not reflect that, as children of the Church, we possess the same means as the Saints used, and by which they became holy. We do not consider that it is now time for us, while we yet sojourn upon earth, to gain at every moment new merits, to reap a harvest of heavenly glory, that in the hereafter we may elevate ourselves to the splendor of heaven in the communion of the Saints!

What torments the souls in Purgatory is the knowledge that they are no longer able to merit any thing for heaven. They can not help themselves; they are entirely dependent upon others. They wait, and wait, and have nothing to do but to yearn and suffer. Oh, how they grieve and lament that while on earth they thought so little of heaven; that they accomplished so little to gain it, and did so much for this world; that, in fine, they have rashly squandered their precious time! Could they in Purgatory practise good works, spread the kingdom of God, save souls, how readily would they perform these duties; but, alas! it is now too late.

We, however, have this rich treasure, this great blessing—*time*. We can, if we desire it, make use of it even if it costs the severest effort and toil. We have still command over the priceless gift. Let us employ it well.

What afflicts those poor, helpless souls still more is the circumstance that, despite their patience in *suffering*, they can earn nothing for heaven. With us,

however, such is not the case. We fortunately, by our patience under affliction, may merit much, very much indeed, for Paradise. The cross of misery and suffering borne with resignation, carried bravely for love of God, and in compliance with His divine will—that cross which weighs so heavily in heaven’s just scale of retribution—will be for us a pledge of untold bliss in heaven. Christ Himself expressly assures us of this, and St. Paul declares it when he says: “The sufferings of this world can not be compared with the weight of glory, which they prepare for us in Paradise.”

I well remember a certain sick person who was sorely pressed with great sufferings. Wishing to console him in his distress, I said: “Friend, such severe pains will not last long. You will either recover from your illness and become well and strong again or God will soon call you to Himself.” Thereupon the sick man, turning his eyes upon a crucifix which had been placed for him at the foot of his bed, replied: “Father, I desire no alleviation in my suffering, no relief from my pains. I cheerfully endure all as long as it is God’s good pleasure; but I hope that I now undergo my Purgatory.” Then, stretching forth his hands towards his crucifix, he thus addressed it, filled with the most lively hope in God’s mercy: “Is it not so, dear Jesus? Thou wilt only take me from my bed of pain to receive me straightway into heaven!”

These were the words of one who confided in the goodness of an all-merciful Father. Are we resigned like that poor afflicted sufferer on his couch of pain?

Have we the same Christian fortitude and hope? If not, let us strive to imitate his example.

Impatience—I say impatience is the fountain of innumerable defects and venial sins against God and our neighbor. It is this that so frequently prevents us from resigning ourselves to God's most holy will.

On the other hand, how efficacious is the recollection of the suffering of the souls in Purgatory! Soon, and perhaps very soon, I, too, will be of their number, and will have to endure intense agony without reward. When I consider the patience of those souls, how encouraged ought I to be to endure all patiently and to resign myself entirely to God's will.

Besides these circumstances, there is in the condition of the poor souls still another, and one which, above all others, characterizes their state.

It is the circumstance that all who suffer in Purgatory are *holy* souls—souls most dear to God. While there they are no longer in danger of being tempted to sin by intercourse with worldly-minded and imperfect persons.

If we were very careful to shun the company of sinners and the children of the world, oh, how many sins and faults would we not avoid—sins and imperfections that make us guilty before God, and from which we shall have to be cleansed by the flames of Purgatory.

Therefore let us strive to associate ourselves in spirit with those distressed souls; often think of them; pray and work for their release. If we were to do this,

how much would it not conduce to mend our lives, to sanctify us, and thus assist us to escape Purgatory, or at least to shorten our stay there; for all the circumstances that mark the state of the souls in Purgatory are so well adapted to encourage us in the path to perfection!

These circumstances are, as I have said, first, their great yearning to be with God, with Jesus and Mary, and in the society of the Angels and Saints; secondly, their inability to labor meritoriously or to gain merit by suffering—things, however, which we can do by entire conformity with the most divine will of God.

Therefore how true and important is not the counsel of the Holy Ghost—"It is a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead"—when we reflect that through our assistance they may the sooner enter into the joys of heaven; that here upon earth we, by devotion to them, may lead the life of Saints, that thereby we may be delivered, if not entirely, at least in a short time, from Purgatory, to enjoy the unspeakable bliss of the celestial Paradise forever in company with all the Saints and Angels.—Amen!

THIRD SERMON.

“It is a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead.”—2 Machab. xii.

ALL the feasts of the Church are sacred, and produce the wholesome effect of sanctifying her children. Hence, the faithful have good reasons for celebrating these solemn occasions with great fervor, and in the spirit of our holy Mother, the Church. But especially is this the case on this day, when the Church exhorts us to remember and efficaciously to assist the departed souls.

There is scarcely another feast of the Church, in whose celebration the hearts of her children are more prompt, than in this consecrated to the memory of the dead.

The remembrance of their pitiable state, and the desire to help them, in consequence of our natural sympathy, are calculated to awaken the tenderest feelings, and to move the hearts of the children of the Church to celebrate this feast with zeal.

But, besides the motive of natural sympathy for all in distress, there are motives of faith which impel us to procure their relief not only on All Souls Day, but on every day of our life. For this our love and interest in their regard is a work not only pleasing to God and meritorious for us, but also efficacious for the relief of the departed souls.

Hence, we see evinced in the lives of all the saints a most ardent zeal in the cause of these poor afflicted

ones. For their relief they offered to God not only prayers, but also the Masses, penances, the most severe sicknesses, and the most painful trials; and all this as a retribution and a practical display of the belief which they cherished—that they who have slept in Christ are finally to repose with Him in glory. Now, I maintain that we, too, shall feel in our breasts this same strong, this same ardent zeal, if we carefully weigh the assurance of the Holy Ghost and practise the counsel it implies:

“It is a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead.”

How holy—how wholesome—this practice is we shall endeavor to consider to-day for the consolation of the poor souls and of ourselves.

O Mary, most compassionate, most tender Mother, inspire our hearts with a deep compassion for the poor souls in Purgatory, so that we may be moved to pray for those suffering children of thine and assist them with all our power!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, to the greater glory of God!

When the Church, on her festive days, offers up prayers and sacrifice, she thereby wishes to remind the faithful of the solemnity of the occasion, and to exhort them to draw profit, for their spiritual welfare, by meditating upon what they witness.

Therefore, it is but just and proper that we place before our eyes, upon this day, the motives and proofs which show forth the holiness of the act of praying for the departed souls, and the spiritual blessings that will accrue from the practice to them and to us.

Now, as to what regards the *holiness* of the act, it is plain that it is one performed through love of God. It is an act that tends to relieve the souls that have left this world in the state of grace and advance them, somewhat sooner, to the contemplation of the splendor and beatific vision of God.

It is, moreover, an act which enables these same souls the sooner to praise God in the presence of the Angels and Saints, for the accomplishment of the work which He began in their creation and finished in their redemption and salvation.

Who can tell what ardent praise the happy soul offers to God in heaven! what heartfelt thanks it lavishes upon its Lord when it reaches the realms of everlasting bliss! how much it rejoices the heart of God to receive all this exaltation and thanks from the lips of a soul forever saved!

It is a most holy act, which at the same time rejoices and comforts so exceedingly the heart of *Jesus* in heaven, and affords the now happy soul an occasion of thanking Him for all that He has accomplished for it by His life and death on the cross.

The same may be said of the heart of *Mary*.

What a most holy and praiseworthy deed does he not perform who assists the soul of the elect the sooner to receive the affectionate embraces of Mary, to do her homage, and to return her everlasting thanks, in heaven, for her motherly care.

Yea, the *entire Church triumphant* feels an increase of glory as often as a soul enters into heaven, and thanks that pious soul who was the instrument, in the hands of God, of conducting it the more rapidly into the celestial Paradise.

The same, again, may be said of the Church *suffering*. She, too, is a part of God's kingdom; for in the Church we distinguish the Church militant, the Church suffering, and the Church triumphant. By the interest we display in the cause of the poor souls, we acknowledge them as our brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus. Besides, by this we honor the Church, because we thereby solemnly acknowledge that all who are of her fold, in the grace of God, are heirs and heiresses of Heaven.

It is a holy thought, moreover, to pray for the dead, as our text affirms. And why? Because all that we perform for the help and delivery of the poor souls in Purgatory, are works of Christian faith and piety. Such are prayer, the august sacrifice of the Mass, the reception of the holy sacraments, alms-deeds, and acts of penance and self-denial.

It is a holy and at the same time a *wholesome* thought; because it so powerfully excites within us

the desire to sanctify our own self. This will be evident if we only consider what are the predominant causes of that lukewarmness of ours in the service of God, which, in spite of all the promises, the encouragements and counsels of the Holy Spirit, still hinders us from advancing with the zeal of the Saints, in the path of Christian perfection.

The sources of our spiritual misery may particularly be traced to an inordinate *love* for worldly goods and interests, the *pampering* of our bodies, and *thoughtlessness* in the matter of venial sins and imperfections.

First, the undue attachment to the things of this world is a serious, a very serious, impediment to piety and zeal, and the foundation of innumerable defects.

There are, indeed, many reasons, if we were only to seek for them, which indisputably prove to us the vanity and folly of this inordinate yearning after the possession of earthly goods. But nothing places this folly so forcibly before our eyes as the thought of the poor souls in Purgatory, the warning cry of poor souls from the grave: "Our money is lost; lost to the last farthing. To-day my turn; to-morrow yours!"

Remember, dear Christians, that we, too, shall once be poor, helpless, and suffering souls in Purgatory; and what shall we carry with us of all our earthly goods and treasures? Not a single farthing!

Therefore, how important is it not to avoid the pitfalls which the anxious care of goods and chattels, of

gold and possessions, prepares in our path to salvation. Even were there no danger of offending God grievously through inordinate worldly cares, still, how great are not the obstacles they oppose to the practice of good works and to our efforts after Christian perfection.

Yes, alas, it is often too true, and that in the case of many of the most zealous members of a congregation. What prevents them from actually carrying out the many purposes of amendment which they so often form? It is naught else than their inordinate love and care for the perishable goods of this earth.

The *second* source of our tepidity in the service of God, and which gives rise to so many imperfections, is *sensuality*.

This is an avenue broad and convenient, by which the Evil Spirit frequently approaches our heart. How often has he not, in this way, come upon it unawares and vanquished us? How often have we not yielded to sensuality on the plea of necessity, or of conforming to others? Yes, the inordinate love of comfort, of seeking pleasures for the body, is a great check to progress in the spiritual life. Here, also, we have sufficient proof to show how foolish and deceitful is the thought that the joys of the world and the pleasures of the senses can replenish us with all good, and satisfy our desires. Blinded men, who are not afraid of Purgatory, provided they can enjoy this transitory life! Yet they shall not be satisfied, because the heart of man is so great

that its Lord and Creator alone can satisfy its desires.

To remind us forcibly of this insane love of earthly comforts and happiness, we need only think of the great, the powerful, and the wealthy, whose bodies are moldering in the dismal grave. Think of the poor souls who, having left their bodies upon earth, are now undergoing intense suffering for the sins they committed by over-indulgence. Oh, how they now lament having surrendered their bodies to sensual delights, and having, on this account, too often shunned carrying the cross of Christ.

Finally, the *third* cause of lukewarmness, and the fountain of innumerable *imperfections*, is the great disregard of *venial sins*.

Of course, every Christian knows that a deliberate venial sin offends the majesty of God, and is next to mortal sin, the greatest evil that can befall a soul. Its heinousness can not be more strongly impressed on the mind than by considering those excruciating pains, which afflict the poor souls in Purgatory, in punishment of such an offense. To understand their condition, we should know what Purgatory is. It is, as theologians maintain, the same fire that burns and rages so intensely in Hell, and whose glowing heat penetrates the poor, sad soul, as no other fire can do.

What is not the agonizing anguish that fills a mother's breast upon hearing the heart-rending cries of her child as she beholds it rushing forth from

an adjoining apartment, all in flames? And yet, what is a mother's heart and her love for her child in comparison with the heart of God, as Creator.

Nevertheless, God confines souls, that are His most dear children, and are still in His grace, in Purgatory. There they suffer, not only for hours and days, but for years and years; and yet He receives them not into His fatherly embrace before they have become spotless in His sight.

Yes, these souls themselves would not leave Purgatory until every trace of the least imperfection were washed away.

We read, in the life of St. Gertrude, that God once allowed her to behold Purgatory. And, lo! she saw a soul that was almost upon the brink of Purgatory, and Christ, who, followed by a band of holy virgins, was approaching and stretching forth His hands toward it. Thereupon the soul, which was almost out of Purgatory, drew back, and of its own accord sank again into the fire. "What doest thou?" said St. Gertrude to the soul. "Dost thou not see that Christ wishes to release thee from thy terrible abode?" To this the soul replied: "O Gertrude, thou beholdest me not as I am. I am not yet immaculate. There is yet another stain upon me. I will not hasten thus to the arms of Jesus."

O, children of the Church, what a motive for us to live religiously, to avoid the smallest sin, and to do penance for the past. What a stimulus to practise all virtues and good works, to display our zeal

for souls with the diligence and perfection of the Saints, remembering, at the same time, the words of the Holy Ghost:

“Blessed are the dead who have slept in the Lord, for their works follow them, and they now repose from their labors in everlasting peace,” through Christ Jesus, our Lord and Saviour.—Amen.

INDEX OF THE SUNDAY SERMONS.

First Sunday in Advent.

- 1st Sermon.—The state of the sinner—a sleep.
2d “ The state of the sinner—a dream.
3d “ On the second advent of Christ, as the Judge of mankind.

Second Sunday in Advent.

- 1st Sermon.—Christ, the Sun, on the day of conversion, at the hour of death,
and on the day of judgment.
2d “ On the tokens and evidences of a true conversion.
3d “ On the four different classes of moral reeds among men.

Third Sunday in Advent.

- 1st Sermon.—Why men don't hear the call of divine grace.
2d “ Why men confess, and nevertheless the rubbish of sin remains
in the path of their life.
3d “ Our confession, as followers of Christ, should have the same
characteristics which distinguished the testimony of John the
Baptist.

Fourth Sunday in Advent.

- 1st Sermon.—On the power of holy hope to lead us on the way of salvation.
2d “ On the necessary preparation to receive the inspirations of grace
into our hearts.
3d “ The meaning of the seven Antiphons, by which the Church, in
the last week of Advent, expresses her longing for the com-
ing Redeemer.

Sunday within the Octave of Nativity.

- 1st Sermon.—The Holy Family as a model of every Christian family.
2d “ On the fulfillment of the prophecy of Simeon in Christ and
His Church, as a sign which shall be contradicted.
3d “ The sword of sorrow piercing the heart of a neglectful Catholic
mother.

Sunday within the Octave of Epiphany.

- 1st Sermon.—The greatness of the loss of Jesus by sin.
2d “ Why many of those who seem to seek Jesus do not find Him.
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Second Sunday after Epiphany.

- 1st Sermon.—What the words of Mary at Cana mean: “Whatsoever He shall
say to you, do ye.”
2d “ What it means to do every thing Jesus demands.
3d “ On the rules how to indulge in amusements.

Third Sunday after Epiphany.

- 1st Sermon.—On the fallacies of a supposed conversion.
2d “ On the most noble and consoling act to place our confidence in
God's help.

3d Sermon.—That many are called, and only few chosen, is the fault of man alone.

Fourth Sunday after Epiphany.

1st Sermon.—The life of man a struggle and a tempest on the ocean of life.

2d “ When Jesus seems not to listen to us, He often comes to our help in the most unexpected and compassionate manner.

3d “ On the danger of despondency.

Fifth Sunday after Epiphany.

1st Sermon.—On the tricks by which the devil tries to prevent in our hearts the growth of the seed of grace.

2d “ Why God permits the wicked ones to live among the good ones on earth.

3d “ Now is the time to choose—to the right, or to the left.

Sixth Sunday after Epiphany.

1st Sermon.—Esteem nothing little which can promote or impede your life as a child of God.

2d “ Our intellect, will, and heart have to be penetrated by faith, just as flour is by the leaven.

3d “ On the hidden life of Christ reflected in the mysteries of the Incarnation, the Eucharist, and His death on the cross.

Septuagesima Sunday.

1st Sermon.—Envy—a most dangerous and execrable crime.

2d “ Our perdition is the more to be lamented after having been a Catholic during life.

3d “ How to purchase back the lost time of our life.

Sexagesima Sunday.

1st Sermon.—On the reason why the word of God does not exercise the desired influence upon the lives of men.

2d “ On the reasons from which depends the fructifying influence of the word of God.

3d “ What is meant by the thirty, sixty, and one hundred fold fruit.

Quinquagesima Sunday.

1st Sermon.—Christ mocked and put to death by the behavior of the Christian sinner.

2d “ The Christian sinner a blind man.

3d “ The Christian sinner a beggar.

First Sunday in Lent.

1st Sermon.—On the intention and the spirit of the Church in the observance of Lent.

2d “ On the three temptations with which Satan dared to tempt Christ.

3d “ A glance at the manner in which the Church observes Lent.

Second Sunday in Lent.

1st Sermon.—“And His face did shine as the Sun.” What meaning has this miracle in reference to our striving after perfection?

2d “ On the stains of imperfection which deface our daily works.

3d “ On the three tabernacles for our spiritual abode, viz.: the pulpit, the confessional, the altar.

Third Sunday in Lent.

- 1st Sermon.—On the dumb demon inducing man to a sinful silence.
 2d “ On the want of determination in the character of the Christians deserting the standard of Christ.
 3d “ Why Christ assures us of the relapsing sinner that his last state will be worse than his first.

Fourth Sunday in Lent.

- 1st Sermon.—How important it is for us to strengthen our trust in divine Providence.
 2d “ On the disposition of the five thousand people who followed Christ in the desert.
 3d “ Man does often not know what he is doing, but God always knows his ways.

Passion Sunday.

- 1st Sermon.—What little right we have to challenge those with whom we live and ask: Which of you shall convince me of sin?
 2d “ On the difficulty of driving out the devil of habit.
 3d “ Let us consider the sin of slandering our neighbor.

Low Sunday.

- 1st Sermon.—The peace which Christ gives is a true, complete, holy, and sanctifying one.
 2d “ The five rays of consolation streaming from the wounds of Jesus, which restore peace in our troubled hearts.
 3d “ In what relation does faith stand to our spiritual life?

Second Sunday after Easter.

- 1st Sermon.—Christ's qualities as Good Shepherd.
 2d “ On the qualities of the true sheep of Christ.
 3d “ On our obligation to bring the lost and wandering sheep to the fold of Christ.

Third Sunday after Easter.

- 1st Sermon.—On the change of the sadness of the children of God into joy.
 2d “ On the change of the joy of the children of the world into sadness.
 3d “ The sweetness to think of God as of our Father.

Fourth Sunday after Easter.

- 1st Sermon.—On the manner in which the Holy Ghost convinces the world of sin.
 2d “ On the manner in which the Holy Ghost convinces the world of its want of justice.
 3d “ On the meaning of the words of Christ: “The Holy Ghost shall convince the world of judgment, because Satan is already judged.”

Fifth Sunday after Easter.

- 1st Sermon.—What it means to pray in the name of the Father
 2d “ What it means to pray in the name of the Son.
 3d “ What it means to pray in the name of the Holy Ghost.

Sixth Sunday after Easter.

- 1st Sermon.—Why does Christ call the Holy Ghost the Spirit of Truth?
 2d “ Why does Christ call the Holy Ghost the Comforter?
 3d “ On the qualities of the testimony which Christ expects from us.

Sunday within the Octave of Corpus Christi.

- 1st Sermon.—On the zeal to hear Mass.
 2d “ On the zeal to receive Holy Communion.
 3d “ On the zeal to visit the Most Holy Sacrament.

Third Sunday after Pentecost.

- 1st Sermon.—On the will of God to save every man.
 2d “ On the ways of Christ calling back the strayed sheep.
 3d “ Why the angels rejoice with so great an exultation at the conversion of the sinner.

Fourth Sunday after Pentecost.

- 1st Sermon.—On the words of Peter: “At thy word I will let down the net,”
 2d “ On the many reasons which urge us to labor for the salvation of souls.
 3d “ What net is at hand for every one to fish souls?

Fifth Sunday after Pentecost.

- 1st Sermon.—There are Christians that live like the Pharisees.
 2d “ There are Christians that live worse than the Pharisees.
 3d “ How must we live that our justice may be greater than that of the Pharisees?

Sixth Sunday after Pentecost.

- 1st Sermon.—On the compassion of Jesus for every one of us.
 2d “ On the reasons which urge us to be, above all, grateful towards God.
 3d “ Let us consider the seven caskets of virtue which are filled by our trust in divine Providence.

Seventh Sunday after Pentecost.

- 1st Sermon.—On the conditions of our life necessary to bring forth fruits for eternal life.
 2d “ On the loss of heaven.
 3d “ On the torments of hell.

Eighth Sunday after Pentecost.

- 1st Sermon.—On the cleverness of the children of the world in order to reach their purpose.
 2d “ On the cleverness of the children of the world in rectifying losses which they suffered.
 3d “ On our obligation to help the poor.

Ninth Sunday after Pentecost.

- 1st Sermon.—Christ weeping over Jerusalem, the emblem of a soul in the state of mortal sin.
 2d “ Christ weeping over Jerusalem, seeing a soul in the state of habitual sin.
 3d “ Christ weeping over Jerusalem, seeing a soul that in spite of all He had done and endured, is lost forever.

Tenth Sunday after Pentecost.

- 1st Sermon.—On the blasphemies of the sinner pronouncing the Lord's Prayer.
 2d " On the hidden life of Christ in the Most Holy Sacrament.
 3d " Pride, the great impediment of real penance.

Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost.

- 1st Sermon.—On the spiritual deafness of the human race.
 2d " How the spiritual deaf-mutes are cured by Christ.
 3d " On the spiritual meaning of the words of to-day's gospel:
 "And He spoke right."

Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost.

- 1st Sermon.—The robbed and wounded traveler to Jericho.
 2d " Confess often, but confess right.
 3d " On the shallowness of the excuses usually brought forward
 against frequent confession.

Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost.

- 1st Sermon.—On the different classes of spiritual lepers.
 2d " On the Catholic Church as the only saving Church.
 3d " Faith, the root of a real holy life.

Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost.

- 1st Sermon.—God as our Master, whom we should serve.
 2d " What folly it is to serve the world as our master.
 3d " On the contrast between the service of mammon and the service
 of God.

Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost.

- 1st Sermon.—On the answer of death within us.
 2d " As is life—such is death.
 3d " Let us to-day take a glance on the four pall-bearers of the
 soul dead in sin.

Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost.

- 1st Sermon.—The Pharisees watched Christ to slander Him. Let us watch
 Him present in the Most Holy Sacrament in order to follow
 Him.
 2d " The dropsical man of to-day's gospel, a figure of a habituated
 drunkard.
 3d " Let us to-day consider the loathsomeness of pride.

Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost.

- 1st Sermon.—On the great commandment: to love God above all.
 2d " What it means: to love one's neighbor as one's self.
 3d " On the signs of a true love for Jesus.

Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost.

- 1st Sermon.—Confession a divine institution.
 2d " On the consoling words of Christ: "Be of good heart, thy sins
 are forgiven thee."
 3d " On the teaching of the Church concerning indulgences.

Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost.

- 1st Sermon.—The joys of the true Christian on earth, the beginning of his marriage-feast in heaven.
 2d “ On the silence of the reprobate sinner before the judgment-seat of God.
 3d “ On the characteristic marks of the elect.

Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost.

- 1st Sermon.—On the spiritual profit we would and should derive from bodily sickness.
 2d “ On our duties of charity towards the sick.
 3d “ On the inexcusable delay of receiving the Sacrament of Extreme Unction when dangerously sick.

Twenty-first Sunday after Pentecost.

- 1st Sermon.—On the futility of the usual pretexts, not to forgive our enemies.
 2d “ On the obligation of restitution.
 3d “ On the obligation of restitution, when wronging the character of others.

Twenty-second Sunday after Pentecost.

- 1st Sermon.—Human respect the great impediment for man to embrace holy faith, and to live accordingly.
 2d “ On the duties of servants in regard to their masters.
 3d “ On the duties we owe to the Church of God, our heavenly mother.

Twenty-third Sunday after Pentecost.

- 1st Sermon.—On the salutary influence of the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist, to be cured from our sinful infirmities.
 2d “ On the tumult which rages in the heart of the sinner.
 3d “ On the consolation we should feel when exposed to the scorn and laugh of the impious.

Twenty-fourth Sunday after Pentecost.

- 1st Sermon.—The cross appearing in the sky a mirror of the adorable attributes of divine nature.
 2d “ The cross appearing in the sky as a sign of victory for the elect.
 3d “ The cross appearing in the sky a sign of eternal separation of the wicked from the good.

SERMONS ON THE FEASTS.

The Immaculate Conception.

- 1st Sermon.—On the dogma of the Immaculate Conception.
2d “ A glance at the image of the Immaculate Conception indicates how to preserve baptismal innocence.
3d “ Mary, the terror of hell.

Christmas.

- 1st Sermon.—On the Gloria of the Holy Angels sung on Christmas night.
2d “ On the conduct of the shepherds on Christmas night.
3d “ On the words of to-day's gospel: “There was no room for them in the inn.”

St. Stephen.

- 1st Sermon.—St. Stephen in the midst of torments crying out: I see Jesus!
2d- “ On the praise given by Holy Writ to St. Stephen: “He was a man full of the Holy Ghost.”
3d “ On the twelve stars crowning the glory of St. Stephen in ven.

St. John.

- 1st Sermon.—Why St. John called himself the disciple whom Jesus loved.
2d “ John co-operated with the graces Christ effused into his heart, —Judas wasted them.
3d “ John regarded his neighbor in the light of faith—so he became the model of brotherly love.

Feast of the Holy Innocents.

- 1st Sermon.—What parents have to do in order that their children may preserve their innocence.
2d “ What hurries youth into the abyss of ruin.
3d “ On the leading principles of a good education.

Feast of New Year's Eve.

- 1st Sermon.—On the characteristic hours which form the general outline of our lives, and their good use.
2d “ How we have to redeem lost time, employ the present time, and secure the future.
3d “ All that-passes away is not worth trouble; only that which is eternal is of any value.

Feast of New Year's Day.

- 1st Sermon.—The general mode of greeting a Happy New Year applied to wishes for our spiritual welfare.
2d “ Our life is a pilgrimage to heaven.
3d “ What the sun is for us in the order of nature, Christ is for us in the order of grace.

Vigil of the Feast of the Epiphany.

Whatsoever God, Who loves us, sees fit to send, we should embrace patiently and joyfully for love of Him.

Feast of the Epiphany.

- 1st Sermon.—Men remain in darkness in the way of salvation, because they do not look like the Magi to the star of truth.
 2d “ The royal crown of Christ, and the character of His eternal kingdom.
 3d “ The symbolical meaning of the gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

The Feast of the Holy Name of Jesus.

- 1st Sermon.—On the full meaning of the Holy Name of Jesus.
 2d “ On the strength and power communicated to our souls through the Holy Name of Jesus.
 3d “ On the dignity of the name—a Christian.

On the Feast of the Purification.

- 1st Sermon.—How to prepare for a good death, according to the example of Simeon.
 2d “ On the symbolical meaning of the blessed candle-light upon its presentation.
 3d “ On the zealous fulfillment of our duties to the Church of God.

The Feast of St. Joseph.

- 1st Sermon.—St. Joseph, after Mary, the greatest saint in heaven.
 2d “ St. Joseph, after Mary, the most powerful saint in heaven.
 3d “ The characteristic virtues of St. Joseph, a model for our progress on the way to perfection.

The Feast of the Annunciation.

- 1st Sermon.—The divine sublimity and importance of the message of the angel to Mary.
 2d “ On the disposition of our hearts to participate in the fruits of the Incarnation.
 3d “ On the triumph of God's infinite mercy achieved by the redemption of mankind.

Holy Thursday.

- 1st Sermon.—Judas, the mirror reflecting the whole hideousness of the malice and abomination of a Christian in the state of sin.
 2d “ St. John at the Paschal Table resting on the bosom of our Lord.
 3d “ Christ, the Sun of Consolation, in the gloomy night of suffering.

Good Friday.

- 1st Sermon.—How the last seven words of Christ on the cross inflamed the fire of zeal in the heart of Mary to save souls.
 2d “ An ardent love for Jesus, according to the love of St. John, is the channel from which to receive most abundantly the merits of redemption.
 3d “ Christ, the Sun, which brightens the dark hours of death.

Easter Sunday.

- 1st Sermon.—On the conditions in which we should celebrate, with the joy of Magdalen, Easter—in the Spirit of the Church.
 2d “ St. John at the sepulcher, and the characteristic of his Easter joy.
 3d “ Christ the Sun, in the bliss and light of heaven.

Easter Monday.

- 1st Sermon.—Jesus lives—be confident children of the Church—but you, enemies of the Church, tremble.
 2d “ The qualities of the glorified bodies symbolizing the marks of a true resurrection from sin.
 3d “ The Easter Alleluia—a joy of triumph.

Feast of the Ascension.

- 1st Sermon.—The longing of the disciples of Christ on Mount Olivet after Christ.
 2d “ To meet Christ with joy, coming from heaven as our Judge.
 3d “ Christ entering heaven, and, nevertheless, remaining with us in the Most Holy Sacrament on earth.

Feast of Pentecost Sunday.

- 1st Sermon.—On the confirming character of the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost.
 2d “ On the hardening character of the diabolical confirmation, and its seven awful consequences.
 3d “ On the apostolate of instruction—example, prayer, and desire.

Feast of Pentecost Monday.

- 1st Sermon.—On the distinguishing marks of the Catholic Church to be the true Church of Christ.
 2d “ On the symbolical meaning of the parted tongues under whose form the Holy Ghost descended.
 3d “ On the dreadful harm done to the Kingdom of God by the abuse of the tongue.

Feast of the Most Holy Trinity.

- 1st Sermon.—The Three Divine Persons point out how to begin our heavenly life here on earth.
 2d “ Let us consider the relation of the Three Divine virtues to the Three Divine Persons.
 3d “ How the efficacy of the three divine virtues signalized the worship of God in opposition to the flesh, the world, and hell,—signalizing the worship of the devil.

Feast of Corpus Christi.

- 1st Sermon.—On the names given by the Church to the Most Holy Sacrament.
 2d “ The presence of Christ in the Holy Eucharist amply recompensing His visible presence on earth.
 3d “ Explanation of the anthem: “O sacred banquet,” etc.

Feast of the Sacred Heart.

- 1st Sermon.—The Sacred Heart is the portal to enter into the sanctuary of the personal love of Christ.
 2d “ To comprehend the total height and depth, and the entire breadth and length, of the love of Jesus, we have to look into the depths of His pierced and open heart.
 3d “ On the meaning of the words: Is thy heart right, as my heart is with thy heart.

Feast of SS. Peter and Paul.

- 1st Sermon.—The marks of the Church grounded in the prerogatives by which Christ invested her Head—the Pope—His Vicar on earth.
 2d “ On the dogma of the Infallibility of the Pope.
 3d “ The very promises made by the Saviour to Peter—the unshakeable foundation of the Church—are applied to us; also the guarantees of our perseverance as true children of the Church.

Feast of the Scapular.

- 1st Sermon.—The Scapular, through Mary the Mother of Knowledge, a shield of Holy Faith.
 2d “ The Scapular, through Mary the mother of Holy Hope, a shield for her children to strengthen their hope.
 3d “ The Scapular, through Mary the Mother of Fair Love, a shield for her children to increase their love of God.

Feast of the Assumption.

- 1st Sermon.—The “Ave Maria” addressed by the blessed souls to Mary entering heaven.
 2d “ Mary ascended to the summit of glory in heaven because she descended to the humblest depths of humility on earth.
 3d “ On the desire to see Mary in heaven.

Feast of the Nativity of Mary.

- 1st Sermon.—The Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary—the consoling dawn of our Redemption.
 2d “ The answer to the question: What Child is this that is born to-day?
 3d “ On the curse through the fall of Adam, and on the blessing brought over mankind, through Christ.

Festival of the Holy Rosary.

- 1st Sermon.—The fragrant roses of the joyful Rosary.
 2d “ The fragrant roses of the sorrowful Rosary.
 3d “ The fragrant roses of the glorious Rosary.

Feast of the Consecration of a Church.

- 1st Sermon.—The consecration or dedication of a Church is a reflex of the love by which Christ loved and sanctified the Church.
 2d “ On the overflowing Redemption of mankind.
 3d “ The structure and disposition of a Church designing the proprieties of our souls as a living temple of God.

Feast of the Holy Angels.

- 1st Sermon.—The characteristic virtues of our guardian Angel to be engrafted in our souls.
 2d “ On the traits of our guardian Angel as our guide to heaven.
 3d “ On the devotion of the guardian Angels of others.

Festival of All Saints.

- 1st Sermon.—The Canticle of Moses sung in heaven.
 2d “ The Saints telling us from heaven which were their principles of life on earth.
 3d “ The joy of the Saints in heaven gazed as in a mirror on earth.

Festival of All Souls.

- 1st Sermon.—The longing of the souls in Purgatory after God.
 2d “ The pains of Purgatory cleansing our souls on earth.
 3d “ The prayer for the dead is wholesome for them, and more yet for ourselves.

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